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SEPTEMBER 2003

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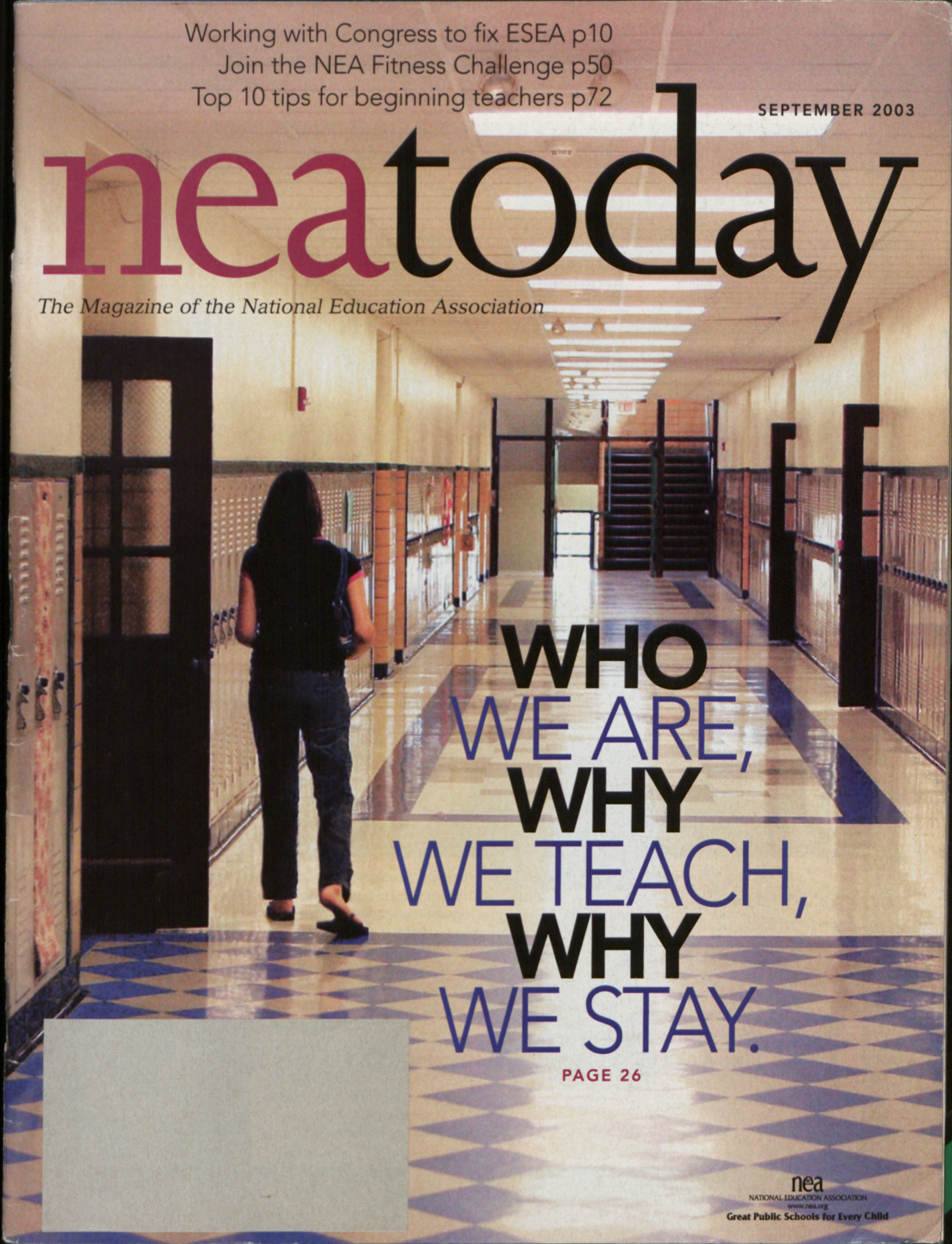
The Magazine of the National Education Association



WHO WE ARE, WHY WE TEACH, WHY WE STAY.

PAGE 26

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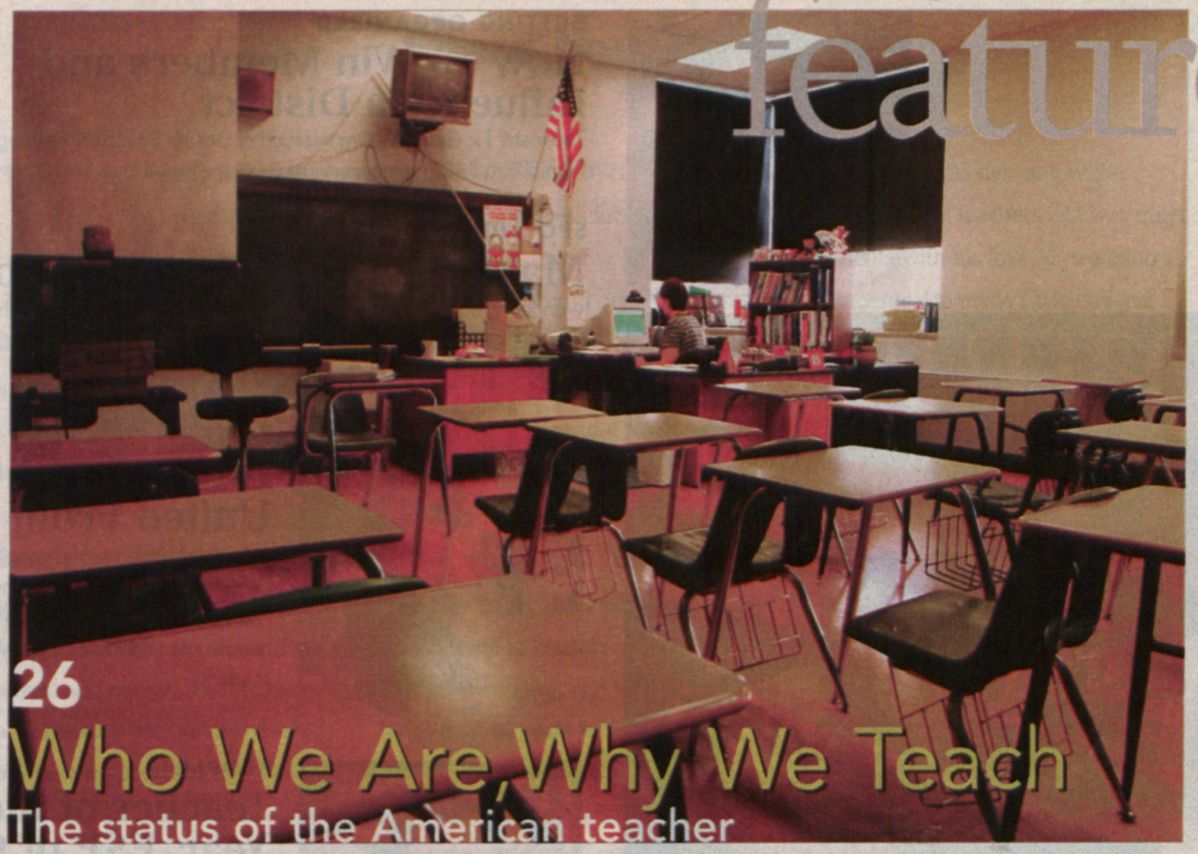

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Who We Are, Why We Teach

The status of the American teacher

Teachers work more hours than ever—and get on average 32 minutes for lunch. Forty-two percent see more than 100 students a day. All face more testing requirements. More, more, more. Why teach? Because the rewards can be great (even if the pay often isn't).

NEAFT

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NEA and the American Federation of Teachers team up to defeat vouchers in Missouri and defend collective bargaining rights on Florida college campuses.

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A Louisiana school got a coat of fresh paint, landscaping, and even a new staff lounge as part of the NEA Student Program's Outreach to Teach annual event. Nearly 300 NEA members—teachers, ESPs, NEA-Retired and higher ed members—joined in this program that offers long-term assistance to low-performing schools. And NEA Student members (preservice teachers) got hands-on experience in connecting to a community through its school.

PHOTO, TOP: NATHAN HAM; SMALL PHOTOS CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT: MONA LISA ABBOTT, LORI ESCHWEILER, AND CHUCK COOK

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New York support professionals bargain a powerful contract and gain "newfound respect" after extensive negotiating and a strong showing of solidarity.

PEOPLE

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Meet Betsy Rogers, the nation's Teacher of the Year (left), and Idaho custodian Martin Meyer, the 2003 NEA Education Support Professional of the Year. "If you don't let the negative things build up," says Meyer, "you can enjoy the positives—and there are a lot of positive things in education."

HEALTH AND FITNESS

Join the NEA Fitness Challenge 50

Want to make sure you can feel good as the stresses of the school year mount? Have we got a plan for you! Grab a couple of colleagues, get some running shoes, and check out the NEA Fitness Challenge. (There will even be prizes!)

LAST BELL

Top 10 Tips for Beginners 72

When it comes to living the educator's life, feel as though you didn't learn everything you needed to know in college? Then check out these practical insights from North Carolina veteran teacher Tina Hicks Whitten.

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PHOTOS RIGHT COLUMN FROM TOP: JIM COMMENTUCCI, JEFF ROBERTS, AND JERRY WOLFORD

® 1

Share Your Gift

Doug Eckert was a young man who came to class dressed in plaid pants, madras ties, and white running shoes—not really common dress for Southern California high school teachers. He was quiet, self-effacing, pretty much a regular guy. But he could captivate students with his love for teaching Western Civ, and with his respect for and genuine interest in his students. He made Charlemagne relevant and Giotto accessible. Kids' questions were interesting to him, and his questions to us were engaging. His was the first "profile" I did for my freshman journalism class (and it wasn't till long after that I realized he'd given up his lunch period to do the interview). ¶ How did Mr. Eckert do it? I don't really know. Do you? How do you captivate your students, enter their brains, change their lives? We here at *NEA Today* are always interested in hearing your story. The magazine sports a new, updated look starting with this issue, and our commitment to conveying the true spirit of the teaching profession continues stronger than ever. To fulfill that, we need to hear from you, our readers, on your professional accomplishments, struggles, and the daily heroics that resonate with students forever. ¶ More than 20 years have passed since that Western Civ class, and the state of public education has changed. I don't know how much time Mr. Eckert would have had for lunch if he hadn't taken time for my interview, but today's teachers get on average 32 minutes to take a break and grab a sandwich. Teachers now are better trained than ever; they're also spending more time at work than ever (see cover story, page 26). Still, educators have retained their unique ability to change lives and create lifelong memories. ¶ And those memories hang on tight. A few years after I'd had his class, Mr. Eckert died while in his early 30s. It was big news, sad news, for the community. Hundreds of students—and their parents—had lost an honored teacher, coach, and friend. Today, I search for and find Mr. Eckert's qualities as I look at my own children's educators, and I think of him whenever my affection for the Italian Renaissance crops up. Whom have you influenced, and how? You have a gift—please write in and share.

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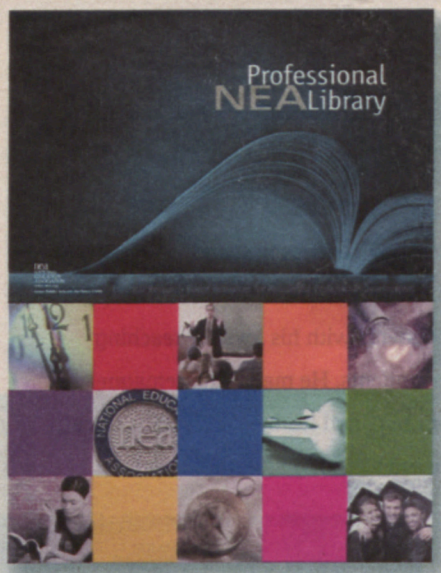

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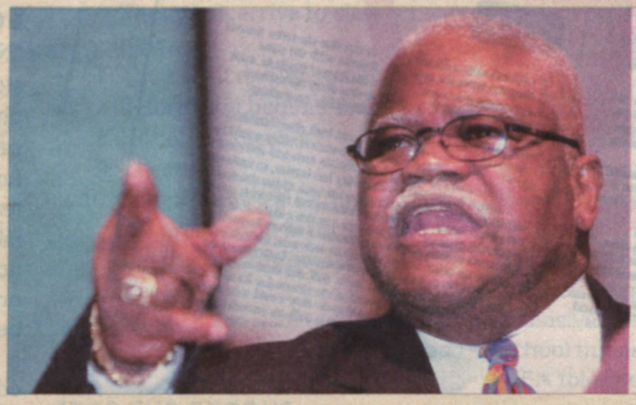
Great Public Schools for Every Child

Team NEA—Speaking Up!

Over the past year—my first year as your president—I have visited numerous public schools and listened to NEA members express pride in their service and accomplishments as public educators. Unfortunately, I have also heard confusion, frustration, and, yes, anger. Why? Because at a time when many public schools are realizing great successes—high standards and major strides in student achievement—our political leaders have put into place a formula for failure by promising classroom miracles while slashing school budgets, increasing class sizes, shortening the school year, and laying off teachers and support professionals.



I am proud to report that the reunited, refocused, and re-energized NEA is on the move.

–WEAVER

But what I love and respect about our NEA members is that we refuse to be silent in the face of threats to a quality public education for every child. We are organizing, mobilizing—and speaking up.

NEA is also speaking up at the national level. Specifically, we have launched a major campaign to rescue the newly reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)—also called the No Child Left Behind Act—from all but certain failure due to chronic under-funding and utterly impractical implementation requirements.

I am certainly not alone in my strong support for the goals of this amazingly ambitious new law. We are all in favor of raising student achievement, guaranteeing a "highly qualified" teacher in every classroom, and leaving no child behind. For us as public educators—and for NEA as an Association—these goals are a dream come true. They are the culmination of decades of passionate advocacy. And it is because of our support for these goals that we cannot stand silent as the bold promises of ESEA are watered down and broken.

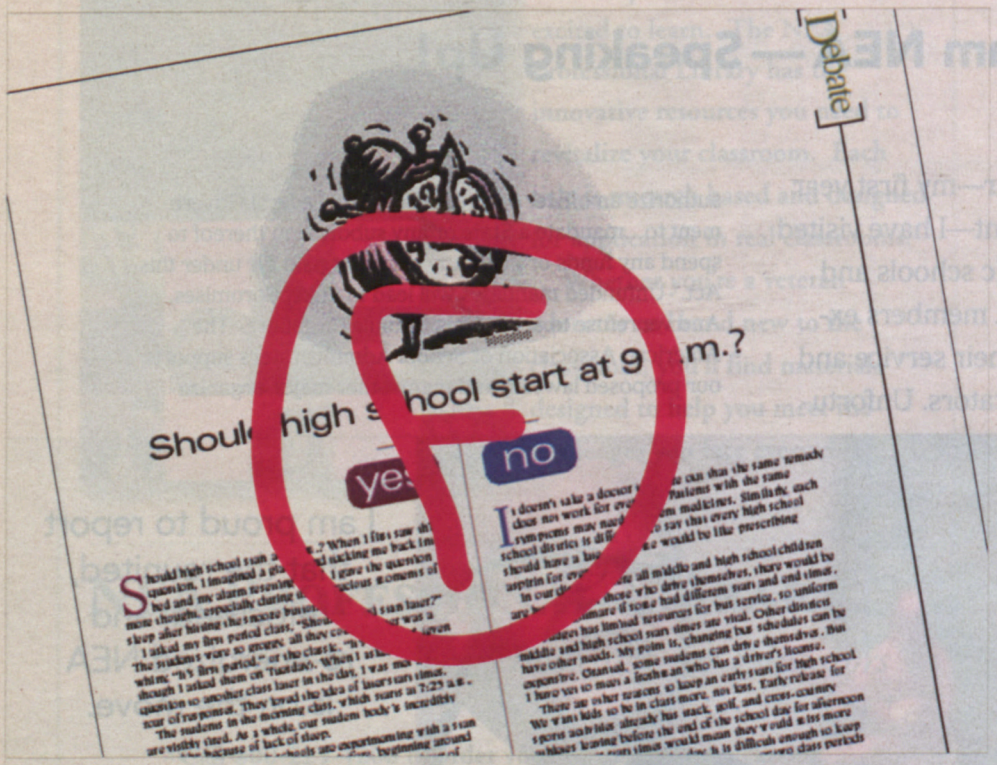
We are working to ensure that the goals are realized and the promises kept. Our Association is preparing a lawsuit to challenge the unfunded mandates in ESEA. The basis for the lawsuit would be Section 9527(a) of the law, which states that "nothing in this Act shall be construed to authorize an officer or employee of the Federal Government to...mandate a State or any subdivision thereof to spend any funds or incur any costs not paid for under this Act." Unfunded mandates will lead to unkept promises. And we refuse to accept this formula for failure. The American Association of School Administrators supports our proposed lawsuit, and many other major organizations and policy makers, including the U.S. Conference of Mayors, have called on the Administration to keep its promises regarding ESEA funding.

At the same time, our Association has proposed a number of amendments designed to fix and fund ESEA, and to grant more flexibility to states. For example, under the law's "adequate yearly progress" provision, all children are expected to learn at the same ambitious level and at the same rate, with 100 percent of children achieving at the proficient level within a fixed number of years. As it now stands, the law virtually guarantees that even our highest quality public schools will be branded with a negative label. This is unacceptable and must be corrected.

Again and again, our political leaders say that they intend to hold public schools accountable. As professionals, we are all in favor of accountability—shared accountability—with parents and communities. But, it is equally important that public educators hold political leaders accountable for their own "adequate yearly progress" in supporting and fully funding the promises set forth in ESEA. Indeed, we would be professionally remiss if we failed to insist that our political leaders keep the important promises of this law.

As we begin a new school year, my friends, I am proud to report that the reunited, refocused, and re-energized NEA is on the move. We are speaking up for the children of America. We are speaking out on the broken promises of ESEA. We are Team NEA, taking the lead, dedicated to making great public schools for every child. And, as the song says, "There ain't no stopping us now!" nea

NEA PRESIDENT REG WEAVER



More sentences, please

At first, I intended to copy the May *NEA Today* debate on "Should High School Start at 9 a.m.?" for my classes, which are learning about persuasion essays, but further examination revealed that I would not be able to do so.

You see, the California State Standards for writing states that there must be five sentences minimum to a paragraph and eight paragraphs minimum in a persuasion essay. Whereas your article does have the eight paragraphs, it does not have the minimum state-required sentences per paragraph. Therefore, this paper, should it have been turned in to a high school English teacher in California, would have received a "Did Not Meet Standards" on the top of the page. Providing that the two students did not have an IEP to contend with, they would have received an F.

Surely you are aware that many items in your magazine are used to enhance our teaching as well as our minds. Should you then not hold your staff to the same set of standards to which we as educators hold our students?

CINDI PUGH
Fresno, California

SLEEP AND LEARN

THE MAY DEBATE about high school start times was dear to my heart. Sleep researchers know that most adolescents need 8 to 10 hours of sleep and are not wired to get sleepy until 11 p.m. or midnight. An early start time prevents most adolescents from getting enough sleep. Sleep-deprived adolescents are less alert and less productive, and therefore less successful. You want to increase scholastic achievement, social, and emotional growth? Make sure students are well rested!

VIC SCOTT
Seatac, Washington

IN OUR URBAN high school in Bridgeport, Connecticut, we got a grant to delay the opening of school until fourth period. The day was extended at the other end. This was intended for those students who were truant daily because of their tardiness. Guess what? Many of them came late and the program was discontinued. No matter what time school starts, those who choose to be late will again choose to be late.

AGNES RATH
Bridgeport, Connecticut

GOOD PHRASE, BAD PREMISE

"NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND" (Cover story, May) is a very impressive phrase that assumes human beings can be molded the way a manufactured product can be. It assumes our teachers, administrators, and staff members are poorly trained because not all students perform in the average or above average range. But human beings are less than perfect.

All children should receive equal education opportunity, but the level of performance will be a result of the intellectual capacity, motivation, and opportunities of the individual.

Educators have worked hard to keep low-functioning and non-motivated students in school to help them become self-sufficient adults. I challenge our critics to experience one full year in a school that has a student population with high levels of behavioral problems and poor academic performance. We must educate children in a manner that will prepare them to function in a diverse society with a need for many levels of career opportunities.

SANDRA PATTERSON
Oxford, Kansas

PAY RAISE COMING?

I UNDERSTAND that under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act paraeducators have to have at least two years of college or an associate's degree. You provide good information about the requirement. However, you—and the law itself—do not mention anything about a better salary once you meet the requirements. What will be the salary of a "highly qualified paraeducator"?

LOURDES NIEVES
Bridgeville, Delaware

BLOCKS AND WOLVES

ABOUT "THROWN TO THE WOLVES" (My Turn, May): I too teach Thoreau, and most of my students find it inspiring. I also teach in an A/B Block schedule. I love it.

Perhaps if John Flickinger's administration had approached it as mine did, the pain could have been avoided. I was appalled when my principal proposed that we consider block scheduling, and so were most of my colleagues. He listened to us and presented us with research. He arranged in-service programs with educators working in the block at other schools. We tried it for six weeks knowing we would then go back to our regular day. At the end of the test period, no one wanted to go back. He insisted and we did. At the end of the year, we voted unanimously in favor of the block.

I am glad Mr. Flickinger got his job back. We need teachers who are willing to stand up for what they believe. I agree with his praise of the NEA, too. But as for block scheduling, don't knock it until you have tried it.

GREG KOELKER
Stoddard, Wisconsin

I HAVE NO QUARREL with posting the Ten Commandments in my classroom as long as I get to write them. May I add to Gene Barmore's:

1. Thou shalt bring textbook, notebook, and pencil to class every day.
2. Thou shalt not talk out of turn.
3. Thou shalt cause thy subjects and verbs to agree.
4. Likewise shalt thou cause agreement among Spanish nouns, adjectives, and pronouns.
5. Thou shalt not whine.
6. Thou shalt arrive to class on time.
7. Thou shalt do thy homework before thou beginneth the class.
8. Honor thy teacher.
9. Cheat not.
10. Comport thyself so thou mayest feel great pride in thy studies and thy parents great pride in thee.

BEN EASTMAN
Denver, Colorado

STOP THE EXODUS

DAVID GANNON'S LETTER on disruptive students (May) hit the target directly in the bull's eye.

"WELL-DISCIPLINED STUDENTS of all ability levels are missing out because of disruptive students." –BARRY VEET

TEN COMMANDMENTS

DID GOD GIVE UP HIS JOB and appoint Gene Barmore (Letters, May) to fill in? As a Christian, I was offended that someone would have the audacity to create the "New" Ten Commandments. Like many believers across our great nation, I am saddened that we cannot post the commandments in our classrooms. They have withstood the test of time and are a pertinent guide for living regardless of one's race, gender, or religious beliefs.

The Bible tells us that we are not to add or take away from God's word. If we cannot post the Ten Commandments as they were given to us, maybe we should not post them at all.

SUZANNE HOPKINS
Clarksville, Tennessee

After 30 years of teaching middle school students, many of my colleagues and I are eager and forced to retire from a job we love, even though we have many more good years to offer our students.

Many excellent, well-disciplined students of all ability levels are missing out on the maximum benefits of education because of disruptive students.

Lower assessment scores are also a result of this situation.

I hope parents, legislators, and administrators can work together to remedy this situation soon. An exodus of great, caring teachers is about to start!

BARRY VEET
Hazleton, Pennsylvania

IOWAN APOLOGY

IMAGINE MY SURPRISE when reading your article about school nurses (News, May). The reporter cites a survey from the University of Iowa. Later, however, the survey is referred to as the "Iowa State survey." The University of Iowa and Iowa State are two separate entities. Since I am an alum of Iowa State, I felt the need to bring this to your attention.

On a brighter note, I do enjoy reading this publication from cover to cover each month. It is a wonderful perk of my NEA membership.

Go Cyclones!

PERI HARTZELL
Coffeyville, Kansas

(Editor's note: The survey was conducted by a faculty member at the University of Iowa. We regret the error.)

TO SAY THAT "A public school may not be as dangerous as a hospital intensive care unit" is a put down of school nursing. Would teachers and NEA tolerate comparison of the importance of elementary teachers vs. college teachers? A medication error is a medication error no matter whether it takes place in an ICU or a school clinic.

School nurses practice alone and without peer support or hospital equipment.

Their licenses are on the line daily as they delegate nursing procedures such as the administration of medication to non-licensed personnel, because we are stretched too thin.

Believe me, medication errors are not the only area of concern.

GRETCHEN JOHNSON
Sparks, Nevada

LET'S TALK

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Letters are edited for length and clarity.

upfront

Trends
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IDEA: Final Rounds

Congressional debate over the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is heating up again, but with an end finally in view. The Senate will consider a bill in September, then a House-Senate conference committee will craft legislation the full Congress will vote on this fall.

The verdict so far? NEA has scored major victories, helping to:

- defeat feverish attempts to include vouchers
- get improved working conditions, including paperwork reduction and use of a model national IEP
- include early intervention measures that allow 15 percent of funding for prereferral and classroom strategies
- get more funding for professional development.

BUT there's major work left:

Full funding—The House has adamantly rejected attempts to make this mandatory, and the bill the Senate will consider follows suit. While the House did raise authorized funding levels by $4.7 billion over the next two years, NEA will continue its push for full funding and lobby for the Hagel-Harkin full funding amendment (S. 939) during the Senate floor debate.

Highly qualified definition—After intense NEA advocacy, a Senate committee agreed that the definition set forth in the new Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) should not apply to special education teachers. Its bill declares these teachers highly qualified if they are certified or licensed by the state in special ed. The House bill offers no such provision, putting in jeopardy thousands of special ed teachers who teach core academic subjects.

To do! Check out the latest congressional activity and write your rep at NEA's Legislative Action Center (www.nea.org/lac.)

Get on the NEA-IDEA activist e-mail list. Send an e-mail to Patti Ralabate at pralabate@nea.org.

Rocking the Boat

State budget woes may be worsening by the day, but NEA members in some 20 states, from Nevada to New Jersey, have found their voices at public rallies protesting cuts in education.

In New York, NEA members joined 25,000 other advocates, including colleagues from the American Federation of Teachers, parents, school board members, and administrators, in a march to the state capitol in May. This marked the first time in the state's history that the education community rallied as one.

"It was incredible to see this kind of solidarity," says Teresa Bennett, a school board member who traveled to the Albany rally from Plattsburgh, New York.

At an April rally organized by the Nebraska State Education Association, Omaha Superintendent John Mackiel drove home the reasoning for the unity, saying school funding had taken a back seat to prisons, corporate subsidies, and "trust funds for roads."

Can the disdain for adequate funding continue? Not if the public makes lawmakers accountable.

"We need to disrupt their quiet!" cried Virginia Education Association President Jean Bankos at an April state rally. "We need to make noise [and] let them know in no uncertain terms that their lifeboats are not safe. As long as our schools are underfunded, we need to rock their boats!"

PHOTO TOP: DUNCAN SMITH; BOTTOM: JOE PUTROCK

5 Zany Ways... To Make the First Week of School Great

Fearing chaos? Dreading first-day blahs? No need. Fun is everywhere you are.

- **Take advantage of the end-of-summer sales and buy a new pair of comfortable shoes. Your feet will thank you at the end of that first day back.**
- **Make time for one last dip in the pool and sip a frozen drink. It may be the last time you get to really kick back until winter break.**
- **Practice grinning—a lot. It'll help when, well, there's nothing to grin about.**
- **Once back in class, spend the first day of school encouraging teamwork and friendship in ways that will be fun for your students—and a hoot for you. Challenge your gang to a scavenger hunt or a quiz on trivia. Or have each group compose a rap about themselves and sing it or act out a scene in a popular movie that speaks to who they "are."**
- **Tell your colleagues how much you value them; the goodwill will flow.**

IN MINNESOTA, A NEW TEACHER making $30,600 a year could pay as much as $12,000 a year for family health insurance coverage.

Cellblocks or Classrooms?

You already knew, but the evidence is in: States are spending way more money on prisons than on higher education. A study by the Justice Policy Institute (JPI) reports that between 1985 and 2000, states increased spending to higher education by 24 percent, compared with an increase of 166 percent for corrections. Thirteen states reported having a higher number of African Americans in jail than in higher education between 1980 and 2000. While some states voted to close prisons to slash budget costs in 2003, a follow-up study by JPI reports that one out of every 14 dollars spent in state budgets still went to corrections.

Notepad

Can Ya Hear Me Now?

Teachers have been shouting to reach students in the back row probably since Socrates, all too often doing serious damage to themselves in the process. But listen up about a practical, technological solution: wireless sound systems. At Pioneer Elementary in West Valley City, Utah, teachers wear wireless microphones and speakers distribute the sound evenly around the room, reports the *Deseret News* of Salt Lake City. Before, said fourth-grade teacher Shauna Starr, "I was ready to quit. When I started losing my voice, it frightened me." Now, though she speaks more softly, her students hear better and are more engaged. The equipment and installation cost: $1,600 per classroom.

ESEA Testing: It Ain't Cheap

Ever wonder how much all the new testing mandated under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act will really cost? The General Accounting Office has done some official calculating and recently reported the price tag: between $1.9 and $5.3 billion over the next seven years. Exactly what the damage will be for your state depends on the kind of tests it decides to use; typically, the better the test, the higher the costs. But states are strapped, and Congress is resistant to ponying up more funds. So far it's allocated $771 million over the next three years. Go figure.

Have some news to share?

> **By mail:** *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036

> **By e-mail:** neatoday@nea.org

ILLUSTRATION, TOP: ELIZABETH BRANDT

ESEA: Getting It Right

Since the new Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed 1 1/2 years ago, NEA has been assessing its impact and lobbying for legislative improvements that better nurture its goals. In July, NEA announced plans to legally challenge the burdensome, unfunded mandates imposed on the states by the law. Many in Congress, meanwhile, say they support NEA's quest for changes in the law, and some have proposed corrective amendments. Contact your congressional reps (visit www.nea.org/lac) and urge them to support these fixes.

H.R. 947, The School Capacity Relief Act by Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-NY) would allow local school districts to prohibit the transfer of students from schools identified for school improvement to another school if that school is at or above capacity, or if such transfer would increase the school's average class size above what the state prescribes.

S. 956, The Student Testing Flexibility Act of 2003 by Sen. Russell Feingold (D-WI) would require the Secretary of Education to grant a state's request to waive the required annual testing in each of grades 3–8, if the state demonstrates it has significantly closed the achievement gap or, for two consecutive years, exceeded the state's Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) standards.

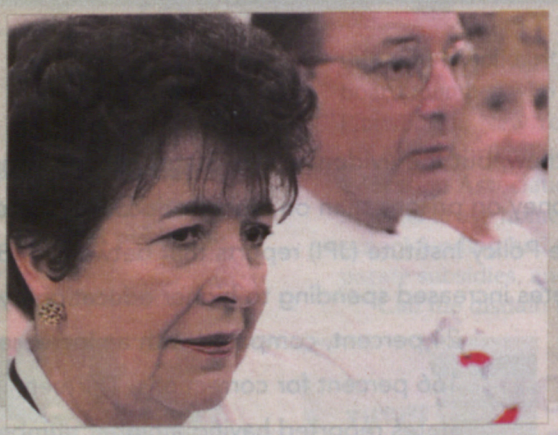
H.R. 2107, The Keep Our Promise to America's Children and Teachers Act by Rep. Christopher Van Hollen (D-MD) would guarantee full funding for ESEA and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

S. 1189, The Federal Education Fair Accountability Act of 2003 by Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL), or similar legislation offered by Rep. Dennis Moore (D-KS), which would allow states to defer or suspend the school improvement, corrective action, and restructuring "sanctions" imposed for failure to meet AYP for any year in which the federal government provides less than 95 percent of the yearly authorized amounts for Title I.

RETIREMENT

Why GPO/WEP Isn't OK

"My husband put 47 years of his life into the Social Security retirement system. I taught for 32 years. Three days after I retired, my husband died," NEA-Retired member Fran Valenzuela said during a visit to Capitol Hill in May, "and I don't get a penny from Social Security."



Valenzuela

Valenzuela, a Texan, was among a contingent of NEA members who showed up in force at a May 1 hearing of the Social Security Subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee. The topic: two laws—the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP)—that unfairly penalize retired public employees by denying them earned benefits.

The GPO reduces a public employee's Social Security spousal or survivor benefits by an amount equal to two-thirds of his or her public pension. So an educator whose spouse works in the private sector and pays into Social Security (like Valenzuela) will not be eligible for full survivor benefits if her spouse predeceases her.

The WEP reduces benefits public employees earned in an earlier career or in a second job. For example, a teacher who entered the profession after working in the private sector, or a support professional who supplements his income by working part-time in a private sector job, might lose a significant amount of the Social Security benefits earned in those private sector jobs.

To find out more about GPO and WEP, go to www.nea.org/lac/socsec.

ILLUSTRATION TOP: MATT FOSTER; PHOTO BOTTOM: CHRIS MADALONE

Mixing It Up Over Grub

You know the drill: Your students break for lunch and before you can bat an eye, they're huddling in the cafeteria with their "homies." Same crowd. Same table. Same chatter.

Can the pattern be broken? The folk at the Southern Poverty Law Center's anti-bias project, Teaching Tolerance, believe it can. On November 18, they're sponsoring their second annual Mix It Up At Lunch Day.

The idea: to have students eat lunch for one day at a new table in hopes they'll strike up some cool new friendships. Teachers then get armed with all kinds of activity guides for helping promote student dialogue and cooperation throughout the school year.

Last year more than 200,000 students at 3,000 schools across the country participated, and organizers expect even more this year. "Mix It Up ultimately is about creating a school community where everyone is welcomed, respected, and valued," says Jennifer Holladay, director of Tolerance.org, the Web site for Teaching Tolerance. "It's about creating a safe environment where students can grow and learn academically and socially."

To sign up your school and get a Mix It Up starter kit, go to www.mixitup.org

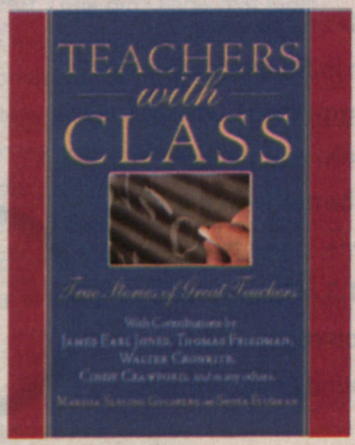
—JOSEF SAWYER

40 PERCENT of funding for after-school programs authorized by ESEA would be cut under President Bush's proposed 2004 budget.

Need a Lift?

Of interest

Treat yourself to a book full of tributes to people just like you. *Teachers with Class: True Stories of Great Teachers* by Marsha Serling Goldberg and Sonia Feldman celebrates the profound impact caring teachers had in the lives of famous and not-so-famous people, including Walter Cronkite, Marian Wright Edelman, Thomas Friedman, and James Earl Jones. Jones, for example, tells the dramatic story of how an English teacher helped him overcome his stutter. Want more information? Go to **www.teacherswithclass.com.** A portion of the proceeds will be donated to The NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education.



Global Takes

Africa: The Good, Bad, and Ugly

Ethiopian Teachers' Association President Taye Woldesmiate was fresh out of jail when he got up to address the NEA's Representative Assembly in New Orleans this summer. He had spent six years incarcerated on trumped up charges of working to overthrow the government, but was finally released after pressure from NEA and many other groups.

That's the good news. The bad news is that, according to Woldesmiate, education in Ethiopia is going downhill. Two-thirds of Ethiopian children are not in school.

Things look a bit better in Kenya, where a new government is trying to carry out its election pledge to eliminate fees for primary school (grades one through eight). According to *Education Week*, a million extra students are trying to squeeze into Kenyan schools, pushing class size over 100 in some areas. Some teachers are meeting their students under trees for lack of indoor space.

Education International, the world federation of educators' unions that includes NEA, has called on the United States and other wealthy countries to help Kenya and other poor nations pay for schools.

England: Just Saying No

You may still be woozy over having to administer all those tests last year, but members of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) in England have thrown down the gauntlet. The 250,000-member union is talking about boycotting "disgusting" national tests for 7-, 11- and 14-year-olds. The NUT says students are too stressed out; one activist called it a form of "child abuse." Stay tuned.

PHOTO TOP: NATHAN HAM

Pursuing a Livable Wage

"You can't eat health insurance or pay bills with it." –WENZEL

Education support professionals (ESPs) from Vermont don't play around when it comes to advocating a livable wage. When they gathered last spring with Association staffers and livable wage advocates, these NEA members shared some no-holds-barred advice on how to beat school board administrators at their own game.

Minnick

For example, when confronted by negotiators looking to skimp on salaries, Vergennes paraprofessional Rose Wenzel advised not falling for the line, "We pay your health insurance." Just tell 'em: "You can't eat health insurance or pay bills with it!" she said.

That kind of firm stand is a must, agreed Debbie Minnick, president of the Ithaca (New York) Paraprofessional Association. It's what won her members a contract in 2002 that boosts the starting wage by 50 percent over three years—without givebacks. "I'm here to tell you it takes a lot of organizing, a lot of meetings, and lot of communications," said Minnick, one of several living wage activists who took time to deliberate with the Vermonters on how to build community coalitions, inter-union solidarity, and workplace "power" for decent pay.

Don't buy administrators' plea that "there's no money anymore," Minnick advised. "They always have money. You have to ask and you have to go for it."

Convinced it's time for a livable wage campaign? Grants are available to local affiliates through NEA regional offices. **For more information** contact Jorge Rivera at Jrivera@nea.org.

Money, Money, Money, Mon-ey

As education cuts take their toll from one end of the country to the other, communities have been scurrying to compensate. Parents in **Eugene, Oregon,** donated their blood plasma to keep teachers working, while children in **Sonoma County, California,** reached into their piggy banks and forked over $100 in dimes, nickels, and pennies. But alas, the rich are clearly coping better than the poor. According to the Oakland *Tribune*, parents in **Woodside, California,** raised $1.3 million—that's $3,000 a child—through donation request letters and an auction. Can your community match that?

PHOTO TOP: DAVE WINANS; ILLUSTRATION BOTTOM: MICHAEL MCFARLANE

New Teachers: Just Go 'Click!'

Know a student teacher who wants to join NEA? Well, spread the news: Starting August 25 these prospective "newbies" can enroll in the Student Program online and get immediate access to NEA programs and resources.

Until now students who signed up often would not get their bonanza of Association perks for several months after joining. That's because forms for active members typically get processed first. Now, through online enrollment, student information will be fed into the general database and members will get immediate access to *Tomorrow's Teachers, NEA Today,* OWL.org, NEA Member Benefits, and $1 million's worth of liability insurance. They'll also receive e-mail welcome messages from NEA President Reg Weaver and Student Program Chairperson Dawn Shephard, as well as a new member CD-ROM.

Will the new Web program boost membership? Student leaders say if similar state programs are a guide—absolutely. The Pennsylvania State Education Association, for example, launched an online student enrollment site last fall, and student membership soared by more than 3,500 members during the first six months alone. Prospective members can sign up with a credit or debit card at www.nea.org or www.owl.org.

[NOBODY EVER TOLD ME]

How Soon Can I Start?

My first year of teaching started so fast! I graduated from college in May, called school districts for applications in June, and had my first interview in early July. I landed my first job in late August, which left only two weeks to prepare for the first day of school. I'll never forget how excited I was as I drove to my new school the Monday after the Board of Education approved me. With the start of school only two days away, I was eager to decorate my room. I was certain the building would be bustling with other staff members preparing for the new year. As I parked in the first spot, I wondered why there were no other cars in the lot. Little did I know that most veterans do not consider Labor Day the best time to head back to school! Luckily the head custodian was on duty that morning and, feeling sorry for the rookie, let me into the building. I quickly assessed my new room, noting the furniture, floor plan, and number of bulletin boards, then headed home to plan. Needless to say, I now spend Labor Day just barbecuing.

–JANINE P. RIGGINS, *Third-grade teacher, Atlantic City, New Jersey*

Got a good story about your early classroom years? E-mail kloschert@nea.org. Please include your name, job title, and city and state where you work.

ILLUSTRATION: DENNIS M. OCHSNER

First 5 Years

Two-Minute Tips

Constructing a New School Year

On the first day of school, I wear a construction hard hat as I greet my students. I tell them that starting a new school year is like building a house. Our personal relationships make up the foundation and frame, while the interior comes from our school decorations. We discuss the importance of each element and I stress that the new house won't stand if something falls apart. Then, we talk about building codes and the students design a set of rules as their "building code" for the room. If we have problems during the year, I tell students that the house might collapse and we discuss the "building code" to reinforce the class rules.

–DANA LABARRY
Las Vegas, Nevada

Quiet Classroom

Each morning, I write the word QUIET on the board to help students control their noise level. If students become too noisy, I erase a letter. When the students notice, they remind each other to quiet down. Students can earn back erased letters by working quietly. If the class has at least two letters remaining at the end of the day, the class earns one point. I reward the students with special treats for every 25 points they earn.

–CINDY ANDREWS
Mesa, Arizona

Have a good tip?

> Send it by mail:
NEA Today
1201 16th St., N.W.,
Washington, DC 20036

> Send it by e-mail:
neatoday@nea.org

Great Tests, Great Teacher? Hmm.

Most teachers believe in rewarding the best members of their profession, but they say that "best" shouldn't be defined by student test scores.

In a poll of 1,345 public school teachers conducted by Public Agenda, a nonpartisan public opinion research organization, 70 percent favored financial incentives for "teachers who work in tough neighborhoods with low-performing schools," but only 38 percent supported higher pay for those whose students "routinely score higher than similar students on standardized tests."

42 PERCENT OF ALL UNION MEMBERS are now women, according to the AFL-CIO.

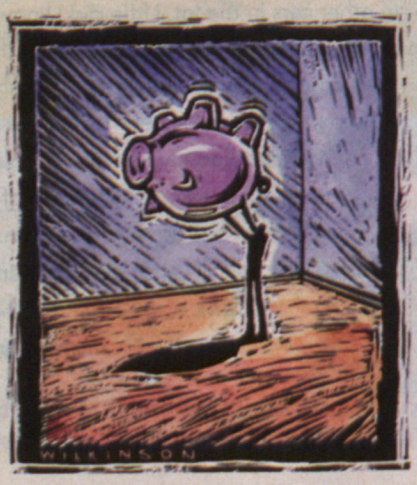
Vouchers

When $40 Million = Zero

Ohio has spent over $40 million since 1996 on vouchers for Cleveland children. So, what have the taxpayers gotten for their money?

Zero, according to a study funded by the state itself. Students who got the vouchers did no better on tests than similar students who did not get vouchers. This study, by Kim Metcalf of Indiana University, is just the latest in an unbroken string of research from around the nation that has found vouchers do not lead to higher student achievement.

Metcalf did find some interesting differences between children who got vouchers and children who did not, however. The voucher students are less likely to be African American and also less likely to come from low-income homes. That's right—although vouchers are billed as the poor child's ticket to private school, the data show that the tuition is disproportionately used for children who are not poor.



Another notable finding: Voucher recipients who leave their private schools and return to the public schools tend to be among the lowest-performing students. Public schools take all comers. Private schools don't.

The lack of evidence for vouchers has not stopped voucher backers from pushing for more, however. **See page 16** (State Report) for news from Colorado, where a voucher plan passed, and Louisiana, where they've been defeated, at least for now, by opposition from educators and parents.

ILLUSTRATION TOP: BRYAN PETERSON; ILLUSTRATION BOTTOM: COREY S. WILKINSON

Test the Pols:

A View From Florida

Think educators are getting blamed for society's shortcomings? You're not alone. Many parents, community leaders, and journalists think it's ironic that politicans demand miracles from schools, yet refuse to do their own part. Here's what Florida columnist Mark Lane had to say in the Daytona Beach News-Journal:

The Florida Legislature and Gov. Jeb Bush have been full of stern lectures about the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). No more getting a diploma just because you passed the courses. That's accountability.

Why don't we have high-stakes testing for other groups that seem to be underperforming? It's time for the LCAT or Legislative Comprehensive Assessment Test.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

You pass a law mandating standardized tests on which graduation and grade promotion depend. What do you do about remedial classes for those who don't pass?

a) **Find money to hire teachers and fund extra courses.**
b) **Announce plans to run summer schools around the state. Tell schools to cut other programs to pay for them.**
c) **File legislation requiring summer schools but appropriate no money to run them.**
d) **It's not my job, the governor will figure it out.**
e) **We all have to live within our means.**

You hear from alarmed educators and parents complaining about the FCAT. You should:

a) **Put failure slips on hold for a year so deficiencies in the law can be addressed and remedial classes organized.**
b) **Lecture parents about allowing children to watch too much television and blame local schools.**
c) **Search your computer hard drive for that speech denouncing teacher unions for opposing accountability.**
d) **Assure those affected that you're doing something and at the last minute pass waivers affecting a small percentage of those complaining.**
e) **It's a great day in the state of Florida!**

If you answered any question with "a," you have no business in Florida politics. Thank goodness, we have a test to weed you out.

[EXCERPT REPRINTED WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE DAYTONA BEACH *NEWS-JOURNAL*]

"AT THE END OF EACH DAY ASK YOURSELF, 'Did I do all that I could for my students today?' If you can answer 'yes,' then you can face the next day with renewed vigor."

–JESSICA RETTLER
Fourth-year teacher, Plainfield, Wisconsin

ILLUSTRATION: WILLIAM RIESER

Smile

One of my first graders was at the blackboard, writing some words he knew. "You're just terrific," I told him, "You really know a lot of words, and look how fast you can write them, too!" He gave me his typically big and beaming smile and answered, "You know what? I even know how to spell Kentucky Fried Chicken!" "You do?" I replied. "Wow, well go ahead and show me!" And with the confidence of a brilliant first grader, he once again put his chalk to the board and wrote the letters KFC.

–FRAIDA ZUSMAN
Springfield, Virginia

As an English teacher I am always struggling to convince my students that their "boring" grammar lessons have real-world importance, but it can be a losing battle. Recently during a discussion about "who" and "whom" I asked, "What if someone calls you on the telephone? Are you supposed to say 'who may I say is calling?' or 'whom may I say is calling?'"
Not one student offered a guess. "Now do you see why you need to know this?" I asked. "Not really," said one boy. "I have Caller ID."

–EDDIE ROBBERTS
Lancaster High School
Lancaster, Ohio

Have a funny school story, anecdote or vignette you'd like to share?

> **By mail:**
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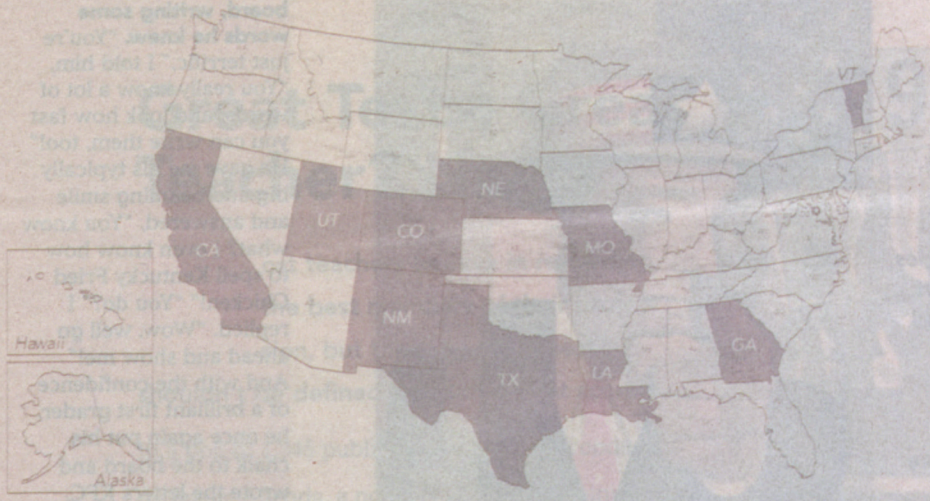
state REPORT



New Mexico

NEA-New Mexico is mobilizing voter turnout for a September 23 statewide referendum on two proposed amendments to the state constitution, one to create a first-ever cabinet position of Secretary of Education, the other to inject more than $600 million into public K–12 education over a 12-year period—through increased annual distribution from the $6.9 billion Permanent School Fund. The added money would fund a three-tier teacher licensure system with minimum salaries of $30,000 (Tier I), $40,000 (Tier II), and $50,000 (Tier III). A bipartisan, multi-organizational coalition supports passage of these amendments.

California

Pressure from the **California Teachers Association** and its local chapters has forced school districts statewide to rescind thousands of layoff notices issued in March. Just one example: After every one of its members received a layoff notice, the **Alameda Education Association** filed a suit that forced the district to cancel 624 of the 635 notices.

Louisiana

Lobbying by the **Louisiana Association of Educators (LAE)** has helped bury a series of voucher bills. "With this issue behind us," says LAE President Carol Davis, "we can now concentrate on the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and continue making public schools great for Louisiana's children."

Colorado

The **Colorado Education Association (CEA)** is leading a broad coalition of community groups, from the state NAACP to the Interfaith Alliance of Colorado, to challenge the legality of a new law creating a "pilot" voucher program for 11 Colorado districts and targeting low-income children or students in struggling schools. The suit, financed by NEA, charges that the voucher scheme will compel taxpayers to support religious schools and will remove local control from school boards.

Texas

Mass lobbying by tens of thousands of **Texas State Teachers Association** members has killed a package of "home rule" bills sold as reforms that would increase local control and give administrators "more flexibility." The legislation would have allowed districts to eliminate the salary schedule, grade K–4 class size limits, planning time and duty-free lunch, teacher certification standards, and teacher contracts and due process.

Missouri

Three **Missouri NEA** local affiliates, representing teachers and education support professionals, have filed a lawsuit over the Independence district's 2002 decision to revoke a negotiated labor-management "discussion" process, adopt a new non-bargained procedure, and implement unilateral changes in other longstanding agreements and working conditions. The suit seeks reversal of a 1947 Missouri Supreme Court ruling that prohibits collective bargaining for public employees.

Georgia

The **Georgia Association of Educators (GAE)** has won passage of a law reinstating fair dismissal rights for new K–12 teachers. These rights were eliminated in education reform legislation passed in the 2000 legislative session. "Restoring fair dismissal," says GAE President Merchuria Chase Williams, "returns respect to the teaching profession by protecting academic freedom and freeing teachers from intimidation."

Utah

The Utah state legislature has killed legislation, strongly opposed by the **Utah Education Association,** that would have provided tuition tax credits to parents who enroll their children in private schools. The measure was vigorously promoted by business groups and the American Legislative Exchange Council, which links conservative, pro-privatization state legislators across the country.

Nebraska

Following two years of district collaboration with the **Nebraska State Education Association** and the **Omaha Education Association,** Omaha teachers have a new evaluation system based on building-to-building uniformity and constructive feedback. A teacher is now assessed on four "domains" (such as classroom preparation and professional responsibilities), and each follow-up administrator/teacher discussion focuses on specific skills or areas where the teacher should—or hopes to—improve.

Vermont

By 30-0, education support professionals in the Vermont-New Hampshire Rivendell Interstate School District have voted for representation by **Vermont-NEA (V-NEA)**. Rivendell staffers called in the Association after reading an *NEA Today* article about an aggressive ESP campaign for a livable wage in Winooski, Vermont, backed by V-NEA.

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24 MONTHS	2.40% APY*	.95% APY**	.90% APY**	1.10% APY**
36 MONTHS	2.80% APY*	1.35% APY**	1.50% APY**	1.60% APY**
48 MONTHS	3.15% APY*	1.75% APY**	1.50% APY**	2.00% APY**
60 MONTHS	3.56% APY*	2.15% APY**	2.25% APY**	2.35% APY**

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$15,000	$690	$476	$369	$305	$263	$233
$25,000	N/A	$792	$615	$508	$438	$388

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**An NEA Personal Loan may not be used solely to pay off or pay down any MBNA account.

†Receipt of maximum credit line is subject to creditworthiness standards.

‡This account offers a 3-month payment deferral feature if you take an advance within the first three months. During the deferral period, no payment will be due. Finance charges will accrue. Your repayment term will start after the deferral period. You may pre-pay at any time without penalty.

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PLNT0903

Academic Freedom: Where Do Teachers Stand?

Educators in New Mexico and Vermont are punished for bringing anti-war views into the classroom.

The Iraq war has rekindled the debate over whether teachers should be allowed to express their political opinions in class. Opponents argue that students are a captive audience who should not be subjected to a teacher's undue influence. Proponents counter that teachers are citizens who retain their right to freedom of speech.

In cases from New Mexico and Vermont, the debate is now being played out in real life.

Carmelita Roybal, a ninth-grade English teacher in Albuquerque, was suspended on the eve of the war in March after she disobeyed her principal's order to remove a poster declaring "No War Against Iraq" from her classroom.

Two colleagues joined Roybal on suspension for refusing to remove similar anti-war materials. All three were reprimanded and docked two days' pay.

On April 18, these teachers filed suit in federal court claiming that the Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) violated their free speech rights.

The school district argued that the plaintiffs violated APS's "Controversial Issues" policy, which requires teachers to be "impartial moderator[s]" and prohibits them from attempting "to limit or control the opinion of pupils on controversial issues." Roybal told *Education Week* that her "No War" sign was intended to balance the "pro-military message" promoted by her school's ROTC program and the frequent presence of military recruiters in the school.

A ruling in the case is not expected until later this year.

Even before the Iraq war broke out, NEA member Tom Treece was well known in his Barre, Vermont, high school for his pacifist views. Following the terrorist attack of 9/11, a group of ROTC students marched down the hall chanting, "Make war, not peace, we hate Mr. Treece."

> "It's necessary to bring balance to the discussion."
> –TOM TREECE

Treece's recent troubles began when he posted a message referring to President Bush as "the idiot boy king" on a hallway current events "dialogue board" for teachers. A letter to the local newspaper describing the posting prompted a citizen's group to accuse Treece of imposing his anti-war views on students, a charge he flatly denies.

"It may be my point of view, but that doesn't matter," this history teacher argues. "It's necessary to bring balance to the classroom discussion."

To gather evidence against Treece, local police officer John Mott gained access to the teacher's locked classroom one April morning at 1:30 a.m. There he photographed students' projects, some of which had anti-war themes.

At a contentious school board meeting in May, teachers and students spoke out on Treece's behalf, attesting to his even-handed approach to teaching controversial issues. In an admitted effort to quell the public furor, the superintendent removed Treece as the teacher of the "Public Issues" course at the high school.

Treece's local union has filed a grievance challenging the reassignment on the grounds that the district lacked just cause and violated the academic freedom clause of the bargaining agreement. A hearing has not yet been set.

So, is it a First Amendment violation to prohibit teachers from expressing personal views in the classroom? Many legal scholars believe that the Supreme Court answered that question "yes" in 1969 when it ruled in the famous *Tinker* case that "[n]either students [n]or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate."

And soon after *Tinker*, a federal appeals court upheld the right of teachers to wear black armbands in class in protest of the Vietnam War.

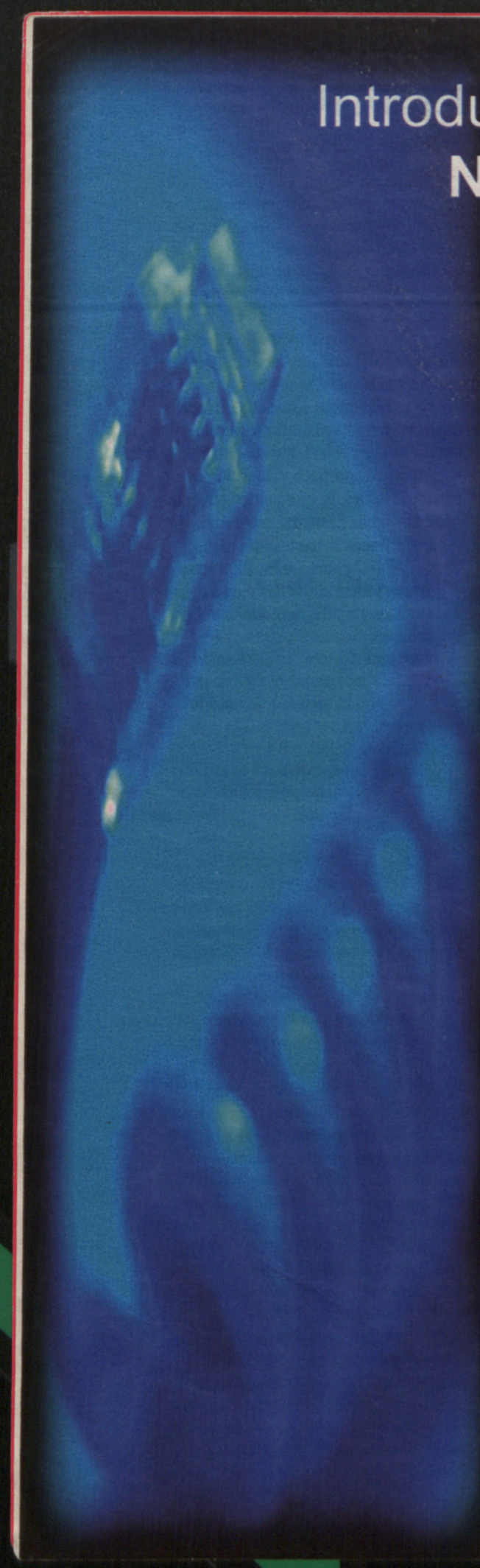
More recent lower court cases have held that teachers do not have a right to academic freedom. And two state courts in California and New Jersey have ruled that teachers don't have the right to wear political buttons in the classroom.

These courts reason that, while engaged in teaching activities, teachers are speaking on behalf of the school district and can be prohibited from expressing personal viewpoints or otherwise straying from the prescribed curriculum. Until the Supreme Court renders a definitive ruling on the issue, however, there likely will continue to be disagreement among the lower courts.

—MICHAEL D. SIMPSON
NEA Office of General Counsel

A police officer took photos of student projects in **Tom Treece's** Vermont classroom.

DAVE WRIGHT



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How To Win Members and Influence a District

A Georgia local reaches out, builds relationships, and boosts membership.

NEA LOCAL AFFILIATE:
The Organization of DeKalb (Georgia) Educators (ODE).

THE NUMBERS:
In just six years, ODE has surged from 500 to 3,100 members—and "our roster grows every day," reports UniServ Director Jody Grogan.

THE HISTORY:
Several years ago, NEA helped the fledgling ODE develop a comprehensive action plan. "We've stuck to that plan ever since," says ODE President David Schutten. "We've made membership growth a high priority and gradually added components such as employee advocacy, a high profile in the school system and community, and strong relationships with everyone from administrators to legislators."

MAKING AN IMPACT:
Part of ODE's outreach includes working for educational quality by "adopting" struggling schools and using NEA grants to donate books to low-income kids, sponsor MegaSkills® workshops for parents, and train new teachers in classroom management.

And ODE tackles larger community issues—everything from parks to landfills—as the only "non-faith" affiliate of Atlantans Building Leadership Empowerment (ABLE), a high-powered alliance of 23 area congregations.

"Everybody wants to reckon with ODE," observes ABLE lead organizer Moriba Karamoka. "Politicians scope out a union, and if it's just a shell, they won't pay attention. But they know that ODE has a large base and it can punish; it can make life hard for politicians."

THE INSIDE STORY:
"ODE is methodical, professional, and doggedly persistent in its approach," observes DeKalb County school board member Simone Manning-Moon, a parent activist. She calls ODE a "class outfit" that remains a "constant system-wide," building bridges among school stakeholders who are segmented by race, class, ethnicity, and geography. One of ODE's best building tools: educational discussion forums that prompt folks to talk to one another, often for the first time.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS:
ODE puts a premium on "relationship building" at every level, starting with trained Association Representatives (ARs) who connect with fellow teachers and education support professionals (ESPs) at each of the district's 130 work sites. "People join the Association when they have a positive relationship with their ARs," says Schutten, an elementary teacher who serves as full-time local president.

BUILDING TRUST:
ODE's web of relationships extends into the central office. "We have ongoing, open communications with administrators and school board members," Schutten stresses. "We may not always agree on things," adds school board member Manning-Moon, "but ODE never puts itself in an adversarial position unless necessary. I'm impressed by their willingness to do the legwork, to work with us, and not pit themselves against the system."

Activists in the Organization of DeKalb Educators include, in clockwise order from lower left, **Minnie Duncan** and **David Schutten; Helen Zappia; Jackie Henry** and **Linda Bellamy;** and **Eddie McCloud.**

PRODUCING RESULTS:
Georgia doesn't have a bargaining law, but that hasn't prevented ODE from "negotiating" employee gains—including decent cost-of-living increases, credit for past teaching experience, a sick leave bank, adoption leave, and even a 19 percent boost in substitute teacher pay—through an "interest-based" bargaining process and old-fashioned lobbying. Moreover, the local has ended custodial subcontracting and won an automatic bus washer, sparing drivers of a needless expense.

ODE prides itself on solving employee problems before they become grievances and helping save jobs of both veteran teachers who were inadvertently penalized by a 2001 state fingerprinting law and new teachers who received insufficient mentoring and classroom support.

PUTTING NEA MEMBERSHIP TO WORK:
Politicians and school administrators know something Association non-members don't. "The more members you have, the stronger your voice—it's the key to being a strong presence in your school system and community," emphasizes David Schutten. "Membership is also key to 'building capacity' so that your local Association can grow, advocate, deliver services to members, reach out to the community, and increase effectiveness to do even more."

—DAVE WINANS

FOR MORE, contact ODE President David Schutten at **presode@aol.com.**

PHOTOS: CAROLINE JOE

Making Our Numbers Talk

Congress receives 13,000 e-mails from nearly 10,000 NEA Representative Assembly delegates. The message: *Fix and fund* the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Tamara Coleman, a high school special ed teacher from Georgia, was tired of broken federal promises to fully fund special education, while Connecticut middle school teachers Aurelia Young and Abigail Warren were deeply concerned about the impact of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)—also known as the No Child Left Behind Act—on their practice and students.

And, Warren, who had just finished her fourth year of teaching, also wanted to "meet other people in the profession and get [new] ideas about public education and how to improve in the classroom."

Whatever motivated these and other first-time elected delegates to attend NEA's 82nd Representative Assembly (RA) in July, they left New Orleans knowing more about both federal education laws and the power of organized public educators to improve them.

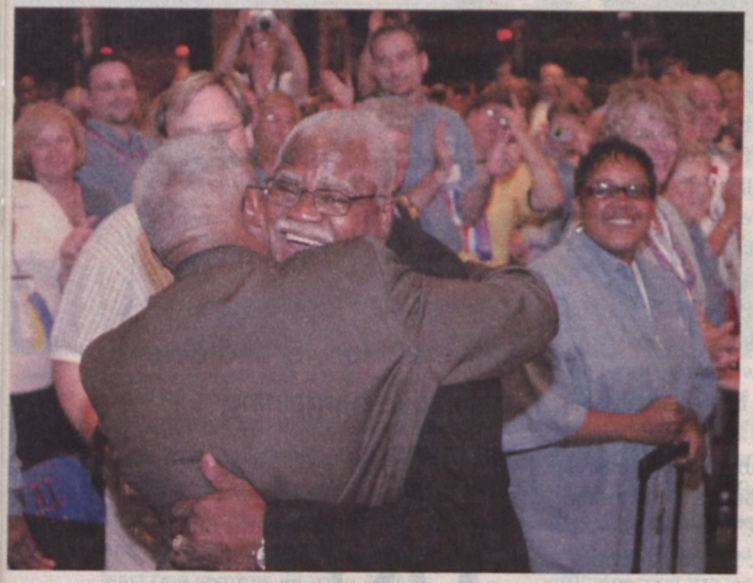
Over six days, nearly 10,000 delegates sent some 13,000 e-mails and more than 1,000 phone calls to members of Congress urging them to "fix and fund" ESEA—and lined up to tell an NEA film crew of the damage this law is inflicting in the classroom.

"The stated goals of ESEA—closing the achievement gap, ensuring highly qualified teachers, improving academic achievement—are from our very own book," NEA President

"WE WILL MAKE SURE our elected officials know that we are monitoring their 'adequate yearly progress.' When they don't measure up, we will hold them accountable on Election Day."

—NEA PRESIDENT REG WEAVER, *in his keynote address to the 2003 Representative Assembly*

Mississippi educator **Beverly Brahan Sanders**, above, is one of nearly 10,000 RA delegates who contacted lawmakers.



RA delegates embraced NEA President **Reg Weaver**, following his keynote address. "We have come too far, worked too hard, and sacrificed too much to allow all that we have achieved to be swept away by people who would not last one day in our classrooms, on a school bus, or in a cafeteria with our students," said Weaver.

NEA Annual Meeting Delegates Elect New Leaders, Make Policy

It's a mammoth task to elect leaders and make policy for an organization of 2.7 million preK–graduate school employees, retired educators, and Student Program members, but this year's Representative Assembly (RA) came through yet again. In four days of business, RA delegates:

ELECTED SEVERAL NEW ASSOCIATION LEADERS. By acclamation, delegates gave incumbent NEA Secretary-Treasurer Lily Eskelsen, a Utah elementary teacher who ran unopposed, a full three-year term, starting in September.

Delegates also elected Oklahoma elementary teacher Carolyn Crowder to a three-year term on the NEA Executive Committee, and selected Jane Ligon of Tennessee, Paula Monroe of California, and Shirley Howard and Yolanda Molina of Texas as at-large education support professional (ESP) representatives on the NEA Board of Directors.

SET NEW POLICY. The Representative Assembly updated NEA's legislative program and resolutions, adding, among other things, an amended resolution declaring that standardized tests "should only be an adjunct or supplement" to information obtained though assessments conducted by teachers to support, strengthen, summarize, or evaluate student learning.

And the RA adopted a new NEA policy on early childhood education, which calls for mandatory, publicly funded all-day kindergarten for all eligible children, plus nonmandatory universal prekindergarten for all three- and four-year-olds.

ADOPTED ACTION ITEMS. Delegates voted on 70 new business items (NBIs), which direct NEA action in areas such as retirement/pension security, health care and school health, and constitutional rights, and which express NEA support for educators "who are facing the possible closure of schools due to a budget crisis."

Other NBIs commit NEA to participation in several national days of action, including a day to focus on "state educational funding" and unfunded federal education mandates and an early autumn Lobby Day for the repeal of federal Social Security offset provisions..

RECHARGED BATTERIES. RA participants took home inspiration from speeches by National Teacher of the Year Betsy Rogers—an NEA member from Alabama—and NEA ESP of the Year Martin Meyer, an Idaho school custodian. "My job description is about a building, but my job is about *people*," said this union and child advocate.

And delegates took some advice from Secretary-Treasurer Eskelsen, herself a former Utah Teacher of the Year. "NEA is in its 20th consecutive year of membership growth, but that growth is tapering off," Eskelsen reported. "It's more important than ever to find new ways to get people in eligible categories to join NEA. This is what will allow us to be a force for every child." nea

Reg Weaver pointed out in his RA keynote address.

"NEA's concern with this legislation lies with the implementation of, and the lack of adequate funding for, its laudable goals," Weaver told the RA.

"Each of us agreed to an *unwritten* contract that says, 'I am not agreeing to teach only affluent children or only bright children or only children who look a certain way,'" stressed NEA Vice President Dennis Van Roekel at a pre-RA conference. "As a public educator I agree with my whole heart to teach, respect, and value every child who comes into my school—without exception."

NEA Vice President **Dennis Van Roekel** and Secretary-Treasurer **Lily Eskelsen** address RA delegates.

Delegates voiced support for NEA's Great Public Schools for Every Child Action Plan, which focuses on passage of amendments to ESEA, fair implementation of its provisions, a legal challenge to the statute's unfunded mandates, and stepped-up member organizing and political action in 2003–04.

"We will make sure our elected officials know that we are monitoring their 'adequate yearly progress,'" Weaver noted. "When they don't measure up, we will hold them accountable on Election Day." nea

PHOTOS: MATT FERGUSON AND STUART THURLKILL

Broad-based Missouri coalition stops vouchers, tuition tax-credit plans

NEA, AFT affiliates spearhead state's grassroots coalition.

Proving that there's strength in diversity—as well as numbers—a coalition of nearly three dozen Missouri organizations successfully stopped legislation that would have provided for a tuition tax credit, which coalition members viewed as little more than a school voucher scheme.

Organized by Missouri NEA and by the Missouri Federation of Teachers and School-Related Personnel (an American Federation of Teachers affiliate), the coalition, People for Public Schools, included civil rights, religious, and parent groups and others determined to defeat legislation they feared would cut funding for public education and divert attention from improving the state's public schools.

Both AFT and NEA worked with the state affiliates to develop a strategy for educating the community about tuition tax credits.

The Missouri legislative session ended last spring with a House voucher bill still waiting for a floor debate and vote, and a Senate bill still in committee. Lawmakers passed yet another bill from which voucher language had been deleted—in large measure a result of the efforts of People for Public Schools.

The coalition includes "people from many backgrounds who came together to work on common interests," Missouri NEA president Greg Jung says. "We all had an interest in public education and saw the harm that vouchers and tuition tax credits would do."

People for Public Schools activities included a town hall meeting in Kansas City (which garnered several newspaper articles and two radio interviews), a lobby day in Jefferson City, and a Ministerial Interfaith Alliance leadership training meeting that helped solidify ties within the religious community.

The work of the coalition is far from finished, however. Voucher proponents are likely to re-emerge in the next legislative session.

"People for Public Schools created an avenue through which we were able to educate people about tuition tax credits and vouchers," Missouri federation president Scott Ciafullo says. "I anticipate the coalition will stay together in order to speak out for public education and against vouchers and tax credits."

THE KANSAS CITY STAR.

Friday, May 9, 2003

www.kansascity.com

Coalition seeks more support for public schools

Thursday, April 10, 2003 thru Wednesday, April 16, 2003

KC NAACP, People for Public Schools to Hold Urgent Town Hall Meeting

THE CALL

Town Hall Meeting On Vouchers, Public Schools At Bruce Watkins

Coalition forms to fight school vouchers, tax credits

A 'Danger Zone' for faculty rights

NEA and AFT team up to sign up Florida state university faculty and defend collective bargaining on campus.

When the Sunshine State split the Florida State University System (SUS)—once covered by a single union contract—into 11 autonomous institutions, collective bargaining and the United Faculty of Florida (UFF) could have died.

But that didn't happen, thanks to the work of UFF's two national affiliates, NEA and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). A joint NEA-AFT organizing project, in collaboration with UFF local chapters, mobilized an average of 70 percent of eligible faculty on each campus to sign cards naming UFF as the "bargaining agent."

"One reason we have seen such an overwhelming response in the card signing is that faculty know Florida is a danger zone when it comes to faculty rights, as we were recently reminded when the [state] commissioner of education called academic freedom 'a wasteland,'" says UFF president Tom Auxter. "Faculty want a contract guaranteeing that the political agendas of board members and the personal agendas of ambitious administrators do not define the horizons of their professional lives."

By press time, UFF had won bargaining rights for roughly 5,500 faculty and professional staff at eight SUS institutions, either through voluntary employer recognition or an employee representation election. Negotiations were scheduled to begin for several new contracts. In the latest victory, UFF won an election at the University of West Florida by a whopping 191-18, with 91 percent of the faculty voting.

Students on the Florida A & M campus.

Intensive organizing continued on three other campuses with another 4,500 faculty and staff. Meanwhile, the UFF-affiliated Graduate Assistants United had won voluntary recognition on at least one campus, Florida A&M.

UFF and its national partners are still pushing ahead—providing organizing help, training bargainers, and filing unfair labor practices where necessary.

"Assisted by NEA and AFT, the faculty rose up in arms," concludes UFF organizing director Louis Bolieu. "They need all the help we can give them to contend with such issues as faculty rights, shared governance, salary and benefits, tenure, and academic freedom."

For more on the United Faculty of Florida, go to **www.unitedfacultyofflorida.org/.**

Coalition trims health care cuts for Ohio retirees

Unions lead effort to develop alternatives to proposed changes.

The health care benefits of retired educators in Ohio will be vastly better than many had feared—thanks, in large part, to the efforts of the Ohio Federation of Teachers (OFT), the Ohio Education Association (OEA), and others with a stake in the State Teachers Retirement System (STRS).

Last year, the STRS board proposed drastic changes to the system's health plan to preserve the retiree health care account, which was decimated by the rising cost of care and by pension fund investment losses. Recognizing the negative impact these changes would have on retirees, the AFT and NEA affiliates took the lead in forming Health Care Advocates for STRS, a coalition of 11 groups representing STRS active employees, retirees, and employers.

If the board's recommendations were adopted, the monthly premium of a typical retiree would have tripled in addition to higher costs for medical procedures, office visits, and drugs.

"The urgency of the situation brought us all together," says OFT president Tom Mooney, also an AFT vice president. "We set out to involve every state organization that represented retirees, employees, and employers covered by STRS. We got everyone to the table."

The coalition met with the STRS board and offered several proposals to increase revenue and reduce costs in 2004. The alternatives were developed with the help of experts from AFT, NEA, and Ohio State University.

In May, the retirement board accepted a key coalition recommendation under which the state retirement system will contribute more to the premiums paid by retirees, significantly reducing the proposed increase in the premium payments made by members. The board also dropped a proposal that would have required new retirees to pay 100 percent of their own and dependents' premiums until age 60.

The coalition is now hard at work developing alternatives to some of the changes in coverage the board did adopt, including its plan to make spouses and dependents ineligible for premium subsidies beginning in 2004.

The retirement board has made a commitment to continue working with Health Care Advocates to bolster the health care funding account and preserve insurance coverage for retirees. "That commitment," Mooney says, "is just as important as the board's response to our proposals for 2004."

"Access to adequate and affordable health care for current and future retirees is our priority," says Bill Leibensperger, OEA Secretary-Treasurer, who is co-chair of the coalition. "Working collaboratively, we've had a tremendous impact and we're committed to continuing this work toward a long-term solution. OEA also believes it is necessary to engage partners on the national level to seek a resolution to America's health care crisis." nea

Defending Our Health Benefits

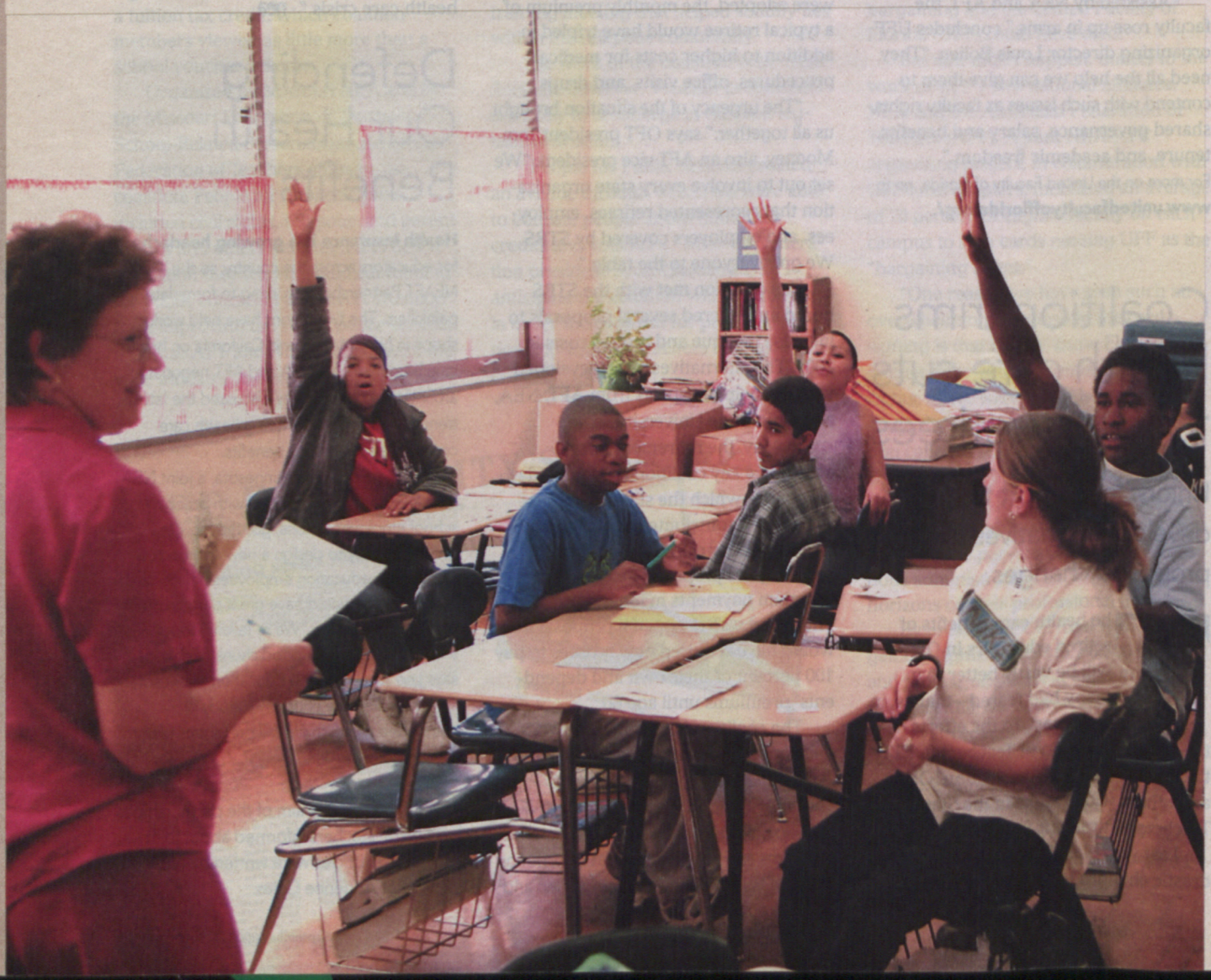
Health insurance is a growing headache for educators across the country, so the NEAFT Partnership is working to formulate painkillers. The two unions have held workshops in New Mexico and California on health care bargaining for NEA and AFT negotiators around the country. They discussed the latest trends and ideas for lowering health care costs while maintaining benefits.

Meanwhile, Education Minnesota, a joint NEA and AFT state affiliate, along with other school employee unions, got the legislature to fund a study to design a new approach: a single state education employees health care system, which would have great bargaining power with insurers. "We're talking about $500 million. That's a good chunk of change," says Lee Johansen, the Education Minnesota staffer leading the effort. The study committee he co-chairs will present its plan to the legislature in January.

The NEAFT Report is a project of the NEAFT Partnership. A primary aim of the partnership is to keep members of NEA and the American Federation of Teachers informed about joint programs and activities in areas of common concern. These articles were written by *NEA Today's* Dave Winans and Alain Jehlen and AFT staff writer Adrienne Coles.

WHO WE ARE, WHY WE TEACH

A portrait of the American teacher



ON HER BEDROOM WALL, middle school teacher Cindy North has hung a pastel portrait of herself, drawn by the mother of one of her first students.

This student, John, had a twin. "The other son was gifted, but John was learning disabled. Their family was poor in money but rich in the things families need," recalls North, who teaches special ed at Maryland's Parkville Middle School. "The last day of school, John presented me with this framed portrait and a note from his mom that said, 'We know that there will be other Johns for Ms. North. We're glad there was a Ms. North for John.'"

That highlighted the end of North's second year of teaching. This year, she returns for her 30th.

Why? With all the talk of shortages and burnout, budget cuts and a never-ending litany of demands—extra duties, prescribed curriculums, higher test scores—what attracts educators like Cindy North to the profession? And what makes them stay?

NEA Today set out to find some answers. This fall, NEA will release *Status of the American Public School Teacher 2000–2001*, a statistical profile based on a representative sampling of more than 1,400 teachers—both NEA members and nonmembers. *NEA Today* also has interviewed teachers and paraprofessionals around the country to learn more about their challenges—and what keeps them energized about teaching.

Together, these form a portrait of teachers who face escalating demands but thrive on the teachable moments and the accomplishments of their students—from minor to miraculous.

The scoop on vital stats

WORKING HARDER THAN EVER. Teachers spend over 50 hours each week on all teaching duties. That's the highest since NEA began keeping track in 1961. Remember, too, it's just an average. Fifteen percent of teachers spend 60 hours or more each week on teaching duties—prepping lessons, grading assignments, and contacting parents in addition to their time at the head of the classroom.

The excess number of students in educators' grade books adds to the workload. NEA's study found that teachers in departmentalized settings see an average of 86 students in a day—too many to give the optimum specialized attention kids need. Forty-two percent of teachers see 100 students or more a day. In self-contained settings, class sizes average about 21 students, but 27 percent of teachers report having 25 or more students in their classes. Only about one-third of teachers, meanwhile, say they have the help of a teacher aide to better serve students.

"I wish every teacher had a cap on the number of kids in the classroom," says Adam Hampton, who teaches English Language Development (formerly ESL) at Las Palmas Junior High in Covina, California. "Twenty is fantastic. Once you start going above 25, there's a factory-type mentality, where you're just trying to get through the material. Is it teaching if the kid isn't learning it?"

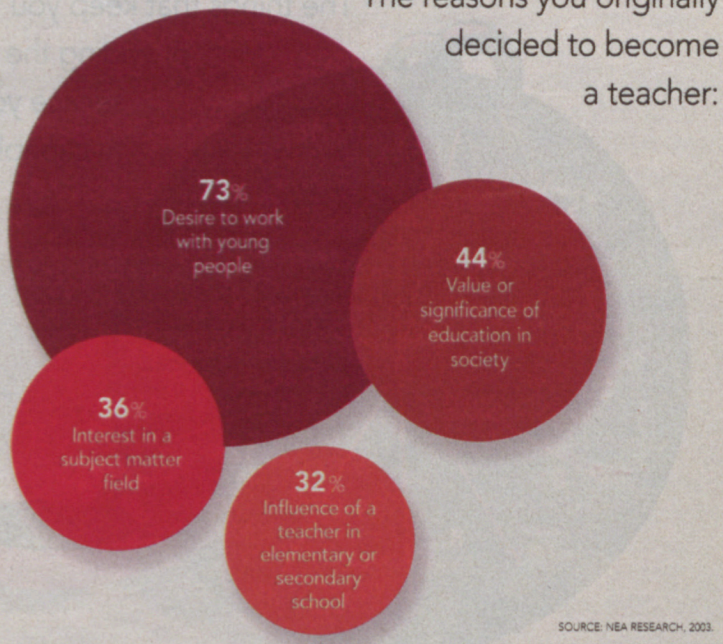
EXPERIENCED AND HIGHLY QUALIFIED. The average teacher has 15 and a half years of classroom experience, and more hold a master's degree (50%) as their highest degree than a bachelor's (43%). The percentage of teachers with a master's degree has more than doubled since 1961. Five percent of teachers have been certified by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, and another 4 percent are working on their board certification.

Only about 3 percent of respondents reported that they were first-year teachers, about one-third the level of newbies reported in the mid-1960s.

What about paraeducators? A separate NEA survey found that three-fourths of paras have at least some college training; 17 percent have a bachelor's degree, and 4 percent have a master's.

What Lights Your Fire?

The reasons you originally decided to become a teacher:


73%
Desire to work with young people
44%
Value or significance of education in society
36%
Interest in a subject matter field
32%
Influence of a teacher in elementary or secondary school

SOURCE: NEA RESEARCH, 2003.

Teachers spend over 50 hours per week on all teaching duties—the highest since NEA began keeping track in 1961.

FIFTEEN PERCENT WORK 60 HOURS OR MORE PER WEEK.

PHOTO LEFT: NATHAN HAM; TOP: MATT FERGUSON

PURSUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT. Whether it's being required by law, district policy, or personal choice, most teachers are retooling their skills through college coursework and professional development activities. Three out of four get professional development training during the school year, attending an average of six and a half days of professional development to improve instruction. (For more on how teachers and education support professionals are gaining, some say, in making professional development more useful, see "More Than a Workshop," p. 33.)

Increased training—as well as greater access to computers at school and at home—probably accounts for the fact that more and more teachers are pumping up their lessons with technology. Of teachers who have school access to computers and the Web, 73 percent say they use the computer regularly for instructional purposes, and 59 percent use the Web to enrich their teaching. That's up sharply from the last NEA survey in 1996.

STILL UNDERPAID. Do the additional credentials and skills add up to higher salaries? Don't count on it. The average teacher earns $44,683—way below other professions requiring similar credentials. (According to the U.S. Department of Labor, for example, accountants average $50,690, architects $59,590, and electrical engineers $68,630.) About 13 percent of teachers make less than $30,000. Despite all this, teachers open their wallets when budgets fall short: teachers on average pay $443 of their own money to meet students' needs, and 8 percent pay more than $1,000 annually out of pocket.

Paraprofessionals face pay inequities as well. Among NEA members, paras average $15,348 a year, according to a report by NEA's Department of ESP Quality. Lisa Romero, a bilingual instructional assistant in Salem, Oregon, says becoming a paraeducator was "the best decision I ever made." But the low pay is hard to stomach, especially since class sizes are getting bigger and many paras are facing higher qualification standards compelled by the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act. "Class sizes and salaries are always a big issue," says Romero. "We're doing more work for the same amount of pay that we were getting three or four years ago." And, unlike the local pay scale for teachers, pay for paras usually does not allow for increased dollars for increased professional training or qualifications.

Sacrifices, rising demands

Low salaries are, by far, the biggest reason for leaving cited by teachers who don't plan to teach until retirement, according to NEA's *Status* report. Thirty seven percent of teachers who don't plan to continue teaching blame low pay; for teachers under 30, the figure rises to 47 percent.

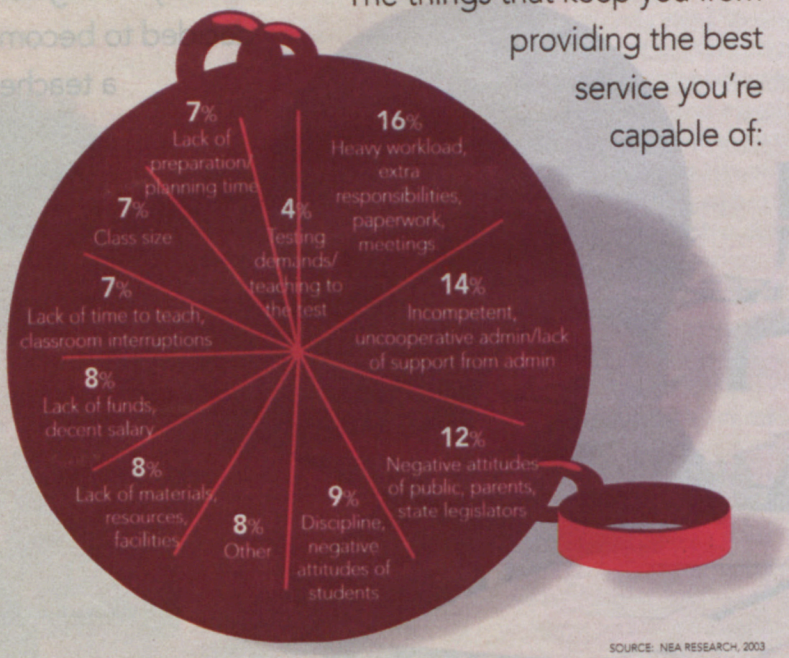
"I'll tell you flat out that I make $2,000 a month from teaching," says David Quinn, a teacher at Edmonds–Woodway High School in Edmonds, Washington. "That's absurd! Yet I am supposedly one of the most important people in the lives of kids under 18." With the extra baggage that many children come to school with, "70 percent of my job is teaching, and 30 percent is being Dad or Uncle David," he adds. There's more. Washington voters last year approved two ballot initiatives that would have lowered class sizes and given cost-of-living increases to educators. Instead, Gov. Gary Locke and state legislators took an ax to the state budget, slashing education funding $600 million over two years. Many demoralized teachers are leaving teaching or moving to other states where salaries are higher.

Watching colleagues flee because of low pay isn't the only strain on teachers. Standardized testing is gobbling up increasing amounts of class time, forcing many teachers to ditch their most creative, in-depth lessons. According to a new poll by Public Agenda, a nonpartisan, nonprofit public opinion research organization, 88 percent of teachers say the amount of attention their school pays to standardized test results has increased over the past several years. Sixty-one percent agreed that teaching to the test "inevitably stifles real teaching and learning."

"Why do we have so much testing?" asks Tom Berg, who teaches social studies at North Hartford

What Holds You Back?

The things that keep you from providing the best service you're capable of:

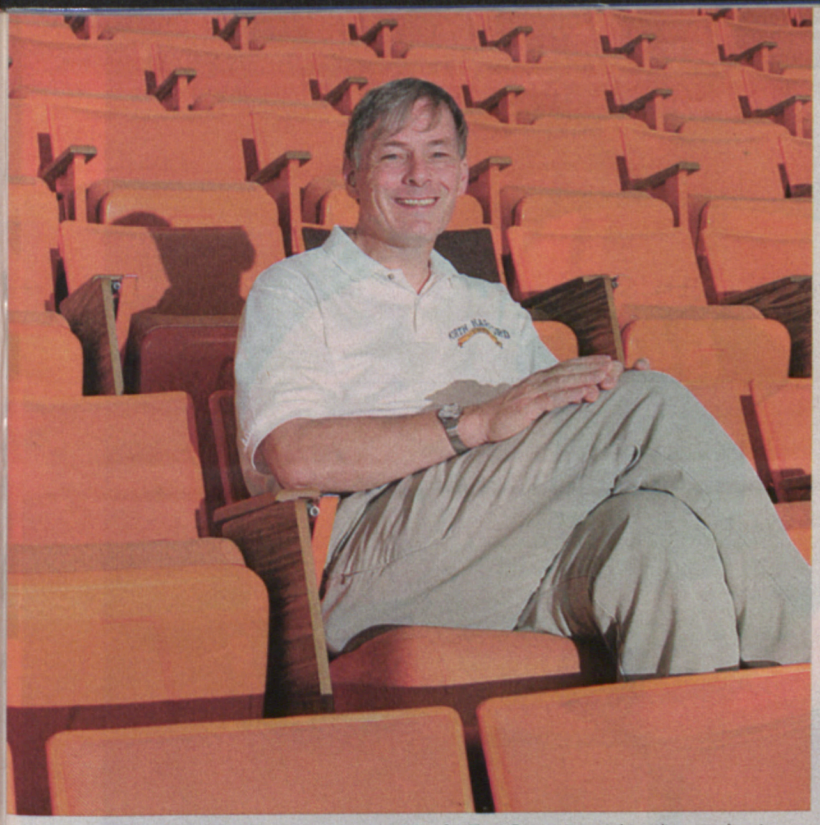

7% Lack of preparation/ planning time
16% Heavy workload, extra responsibilities, paperwork, meetings
7% Class size
4% Testing demands/ teaching to the test
7% Lack of time to teach, classroom interruptions
14% Incompetent, uncooperative admin/lack of support from admin
8% Lack of funds, decent salary
12% Negative attitudes of public, parents, state legislators
8% Lack of materials, resources, facilities
8% Other
9% Discipline, negative attitudes of students

SOURCE: NEA RESEARCH, 2003

"I'll tell you flat out that I make $2,000 a month from teaching. That's absurd! Yet I am supposedly one of the most important people in the lives of children under 18."

—**DAVID QUINN,** *teacher, Edmonds, Washington*

PHOTO OPPOSITE: CHARLES VOTAW



"Why do we have so much testing?" asks Tom Berg, a social studies teacher in Pylesville, Maryland. "Many of the private schools have less testing than we do."

Middle School in Pylesville, Maryland. "Many of the private schools have less testing than we do, but that doesn't seem to hurt their reputation." Kids aren't the only ones being scrutinized—test results are increasingly being used to grade teachers. Twenty percent of teachers surveyed in NEA's *Status* report said that standardized tests scores were used to evaluate their teaching performance—up from 12 percent in 1996.

The overhauled Elementary and Secondary Education Act, dubbed by some critics as "No Child Left Untested," contains new provisions increasing testing requirements and sanctioning schools that don't raise their scores. That worries teachers who say too much time already is spent preparing kids to take standardized tests. (Fortunately, some NEA members are helping to shape how ESEA will be implemented through collective bargaining at the local level. See "A Place at the Table," below.)

Maryland's North, who teaches emotionally disturbed students, cites heavy paperwork and new curriculum demands as her biggest challenges. And now, her system requires that all middle school students take pre-algebra. "I don't know how a lot of special ed students are going to be able to get through the curriculum and the testing," she worries. "Are we setting them up to drop out?"

A PLACE AT THE TABLE

Educators influence ESEA with bargaining.

BY KRISTEN LOSCHERT

For more than 18 months, teachers, education support professionals, and school administrators have tried to make sense of the revised Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The law—renamed the No Child Left Behind Act by the Bush administration—outlines federal requirements for everything from student testing, to teacher and paraprofessional qualifications, to school performance and improvement.

Title I schools must show steady improvement in their students' standardized test scores or face sanctions. Low-performing schools may have to let students transfer to more successful schools, provide supplemental educational services, or restructure. Staff face job transfers or, in some cases, job losses.

Meanwhile, state departments of education must implement their plans for meeting the federal mandates—and find ways to pay for them. The entire process leaves many educators asking, "When do we get a say?"

The answer could come at the bargaining table.

Tucked among ESEA's testing guidelines and threats of school reconstruction rests a critical paragraph on collective bargaining. Here the federal law stipulates that none of the school improvement provisions outlined in ESEA will reduce the rights educators have under collective bargaining or other agreements between employees and their employers.

The negotiations might be challenging, but educators *can* affect how school districts implement ESEA by bargaining protections into their contracts. And that gives Association members some influence.

That influence is not restricted solely to salary and employment issues either, says Bob Strunk on NEA's Collective Bargaining and Member Advocacy Department staff.

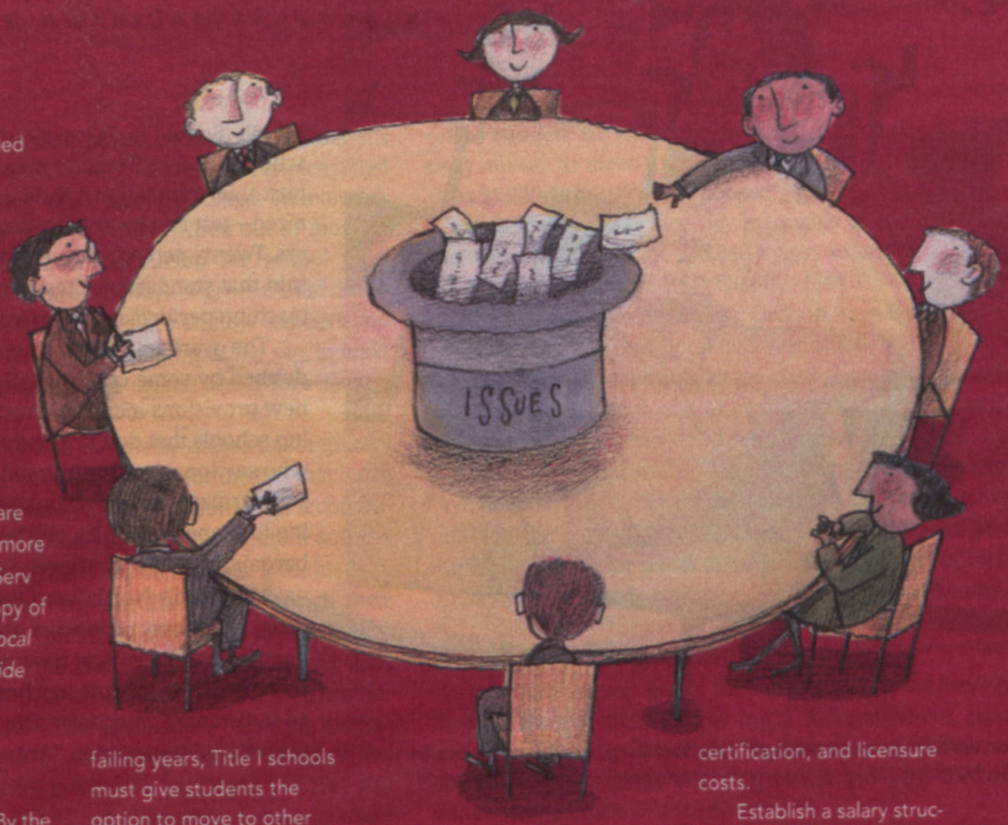
The law's requirements essentially open the door for educators to have more say on core instructional issues such as class size, professional development, curriculum, and instructional committees.

"Teachers are being held responsible for improvements in the schools, but they have had no input," says Strunk. "This is another opportunity to say, 'if we're going to be held accountable for these things we need to have a voice in how they are put in place.'"

In Michigan, local Associations in almost every school district already are bargaining to address ESEA, says Stan Burnell, bargaining consultant for the Michigan Education Association. In fact, the state Association has developed model contract language on a variety of issues—ranging from involuntary transfers to school improvement committees to increased compensation.

Michigan is not alone. State affiliates in Massachusetts, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin also created language local Associations can use in their negotiations. These six affiliates worked with NEA's Collective Bargaining and Member Advocacy Department on a new guide of model contract language and bargaining and local policy

A PLACE AT THE TABLE



suggestions. NEA unveiled the guide at the Annual Meeting in New Orleans this summer. UniServ directors and state affiliate presidents and executive directors also will receive copies.

So what issues can you take to the bargaining table? Here are a few suggestions. (For more details, talk to your UniServ director. Ask to see a copy of NEA's *Bargaining and Local Policy Development Guide for Issues Raised by the ESEA.*)

TESTING

What the law says: By the 2005–06 school year, states must test students in reading and math annually in grades 3–8 and once in grades 10–12. Beginning in 2007, states must test students in science once in elementary, middle, and high school.

What to bargain:

Limit the use of student test scores. Make sure student scores do not impact a teacher's or paraeducator's evaluation, discipline, or discharge.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

What the law says: The student body in each school, as well as students from each of the school's major subgroups—racial and ethnic minorities, English-language learners, low-income, and special education students—must show steady improvement on standardized exams for the school to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets. Title I schools that fail to meet their progress targets face sanctions. States also must impose state sanctions on non-Title I schools. After two failing years, Title I schools must give students the option to move to other public schools. After three years, the schools must offer supplemental educational services, such as tutoring. With continued failures, the schools face outside corrective actions, which could include implementing a new curriculum, replacing staff, extending the school day or year, or complete reconstruction.

What to bargain:

Before bargaining any school improvement issues, review your individual collective bargaining agreement to avoid conflicts with existing rights. No improvement plan should alter or modify existing agreements.

Make sure public school choice plans do not negatively impact transportation and class size. Negotiate class size limits and/or provisions that require the school district to apply for available federal funds, such as Title II money, which districts can use to reduce class sizes.

Limit attempts to outsource supplemental educational services. Ensure that Association members provide these services on a voluntary basis determined by seniority. Push for extra compensation for these extra duties.

Provide parameters for layoffs and involuntary transfers that could result from school improvement plans. Limit assignments of teachers outside their certification areas.

Limit the options available for reconstituting the school.

TEACHER QUALITY

What the law says: All teachers of core academic subjects must be "highly qualified" by the 2005–06 school year by having state certification and demonstrating subject competence. Local school districts must use between 5 percent and 10 percent of their Title I money to help current teachers meet the standard.

What to bargain:

Provide teacher input on professional development plans designed to help teachers meet the "highly qualified" standard.

Seek school district reimbursement for tuition, certification, and licensure costs.

Establish a salary structure that compensates teachers for extra education and professional development.

PARAEDUCATOR QUALITY

What the law says: By January 8, 2006, Title I paraprofessionals who provide instructional support must have at least two years of college, an associate's degree or higher, or pass an assessment that demonstrates their knowledge of and ability to assist with instruction.

What to bargain:

Provide paraeducator input on professional development plans designed to help paras meet the new standards.

Seek school district reimbursement for tuition, training, and testing costs.

Allow Title I paras who do not meet the federal standards by 2006 to transfer to similar non-Title I positions for equal pay and hours.

Establish a salary schedule that compensates paras for increased skills, training, and education.

Hanging on to 'electric moments'

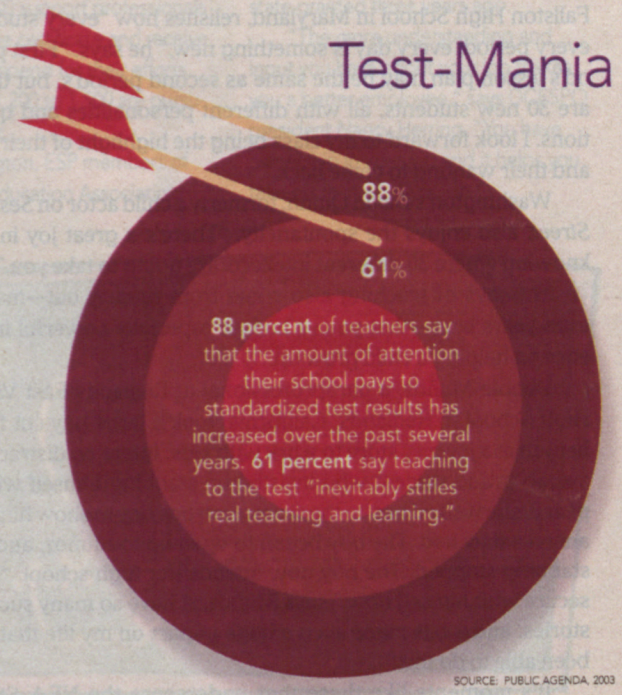
Such concerns are rooted in teachers' desire to connect with kids, to protect those precious minutes in class so that each child has a shot at those "aha" moments. Teachers savor those moments like images carefully pasted in a scrapbook.

"These electric moments occur, and you never know when they're going to happen," says Berg. "This year, we were talking about Iraq in one of my classes. One of the girls—one of those kids who rarely volunteered information—said, 'What you're saying is true, but the climate there is really different. My dad's over there, and I just got this letter from him.'"

The class grew quiet as she read the letter. All the students asked to see it, and from then on this one-time onlooker became an active class participant, as both teacher and classmates referred to her for updates whenever the subject of the war came up.

"All kids have something to offer, something to give," says Berg. "I'm always amazed at how much kids grow, especially when they take a chance."

"It's the day-to-day rewards and the improvements you see," says Hampton, who teaches students for whom English is not their native language. "Kids will come up to me and say, 'I'm not failing English anymore!' and they're so excited. I can see growth in every kid who wants to learn, and I can see growth in every school day. So I never regret going to school in the morning; I always look forward to it."


Test-Mania
88%
61%
88 percent of teachers say that the amount of attention their school pays to standardized test results has increased over the past several years. 61 percent say teaching to the test "inevitably stifles real teaching and learning."
SOURCE: PUBLIC AGENDA, 2003

The average teacher has 15 and a half years of classroom experience, and more hold a master's degree as their highest degree than just a bachelor's. The percentage of teachers with a master's degree has doubled since 1961.

PHOTO: NATHAN HAM

James Whitehurst, a history and sociology teacher at Fallston High School in Maryland, relishes how "every student, every period, every day is something new," he says. "First period's lesson plan may be the same as second period's, but there are 30 new students, all with different personalities and questions. I look forward to my class being the highlight of their day and their wanting to come back."

Washington's David Quinn, formerly a child actor on *Sesame Street*, also enjoys the spontaneity. "There's a great joy in not knowing where 30 different intellects are going to take you."

The joys of teaching also come from finding out—maybe even years later—that you've had an especially powerful influence on helping a child grow up.

Debbie Muñoz, a paraprofessional at Redlands East Valley High School in Redlands, California, took a large pay cut from her job at a jewelry store to work with kids. Intent on distracting a sixth-grade student who insisted on stabbing himself with a pencil, she walked him to the science lab one day to show him the animals they had. The boy began to open up to Muñoz, and the stabbing stopped. The boy now attends her high school. "He's secure with himself now," says Muñoz. "I have so many success stories, and it has made such a huge impact on my life that I've been able to do this."

It's moments like these that underscore the NEA *Status* report's conclusion: you'd do it all over again. In spite of low pay and crazy mandates, 60 percent of teachers say that, if they had to go back to the time they were in college—armed with their present knowledge—they'd still choose teaching.

"When I go home every day, I know that what I do matters to society," Janice Voorhies, a teacher at Utah's Bingham High School, wrote in a recent letter to the *Deseret News*. Voorhies was among dozens of teachers who flooded the paper with personal testimonies after a local columnist asked why teachers stick it out given the conditions they face. The Utah Education Association now plans a campaign around the theme of "Why I Teach" to let the public read these stories. "I am enriched by the countless students who daily share with me their courage, enthusiasm, talent, sometimes off-the-wall humor, and sheer joy for learning," Voorhies continued. "There isn't a better job anywhere."

"A long time ago I taught in Tennessee and Alabama," North reflects. "A lot of those students are probably parents themselves now. I think about the kind of influence I may have had on them, and whether that's being passed on to their children." The desire to mold future generations—and help children fulfill their own dreams—does not fade easily.

—JOHN O'NEIL

Additional reporting by *Cheryl Ross, Josef Sawyer,* and *Tamara Zakim.*

"When I go home every day, I know that what I do matters to society. I am enriched by the countless students who daily share with me their courage, enthusiasm, talent, sometimes off-the-wall humor, and sheer joy for learning. There isn't a better job anywhere."

—JANICE VOORHIES, *teacher, Bingham High School, South Jordan, Utah*

PHOTO: NATHAN HAM

Teachers and ESPs speak up about their professional development needs.

BY KRISTEN LOSCHERT

Say goodbye to canned, one-size-fits-all in-service sessions. Educators are taking control of their career development to create customized training opportunities focused on increasing student achievement and meeting the expressed needs of teachers and ESPs.

"It empowers teachers to have a say in how their profession is progressing," says Terry Hansen, a gifted education teacher in Minnesota.

Hansen has helped shape her own professional development through Education Minnesota's Teachers as Learners and Leaders (TALL) program. Through TALL, Hansen and more than 500 other "professional development activists" have learned how to work with their local Associations and school districts to create high-quality professional development. They learn about Minnesota's staff development laws, evaluate their districts' programs, and develop plans that improve teaching and learning.

"It's not just sending teachers to a workshop," says Heidi Hammond, a library media specialist in Mendota Heights. "The bottom line in staff development is student achievement. We need to figure out what kids need and what we need to provide that for them."

Teachers have organized professional development committees, created new teacher mentor programs, and bargained for more in-service training.

But "the biggest accomplishment was giving teachers a say in their professional development," says Jean Mueting, a fourth-grade teacher in West St. Paul.

In Missouri, teachers also serve on district professional development committees and at regional centers to create meaningful training for their peers. Meanwhile, Missouri NEA (MNEA) trains members on effective uses for state funds and on national staff development standards.

MNEA also helps select teachers for the state's STARR program (Selecting Teachers as Regional Resources). STARR teachers spend 15 months learning and applying new classroom strategies. The following year they share their training with other teachers through local workshops.

But, teachers aren't the only ones interested in more training. ESPs have taken the lead in their professional development as well.

In 1998, ESPs in Pinellas County, Florida, created a "Certificate of Distinction" program to provide professional development and recognition to ESPs. The 65-hour program includes sessions on goal setting, portfolio development, and classes to meet an individual's specific needs.

About 1,600 support professionals have earned the certificate and receive a $200 yearly stipend for their efforts. An additional 1,200 to 1,500 are pursuing coursework.

In Washington, ESP members of the Spokane Education Association bargained for more professional development. Now the school district provides $15,000 for three professional development conferences each year, which ESPs organize. The Washington Education Association (WEA) sponsors three statewide conferences as well.

"It's an awesome way to reach our members," says Debra Chandler, chairperson of the WEA ESP Professional Development Committee. "We can provide professional development to members who don't have the resources to do it on their own."

A lack of resources and support didn't stop ESPs in Dale County, Alabama, from pursuing the professional development they deserve.

Although the state legislature granted all education employees two contract days for professional development, school administrators expected ESPs to work on those days.

So members of the Dale County Education Support Professionals Organization (DCESPO) coordinated their own training. ESPs now take full advantage of the training time the state granted three years ago.

"The more understanding and input you have about your job makes you a better employee," says DCESPO president Nancy Herring. "You have ownership in your job and it helps you take pride in what you do."

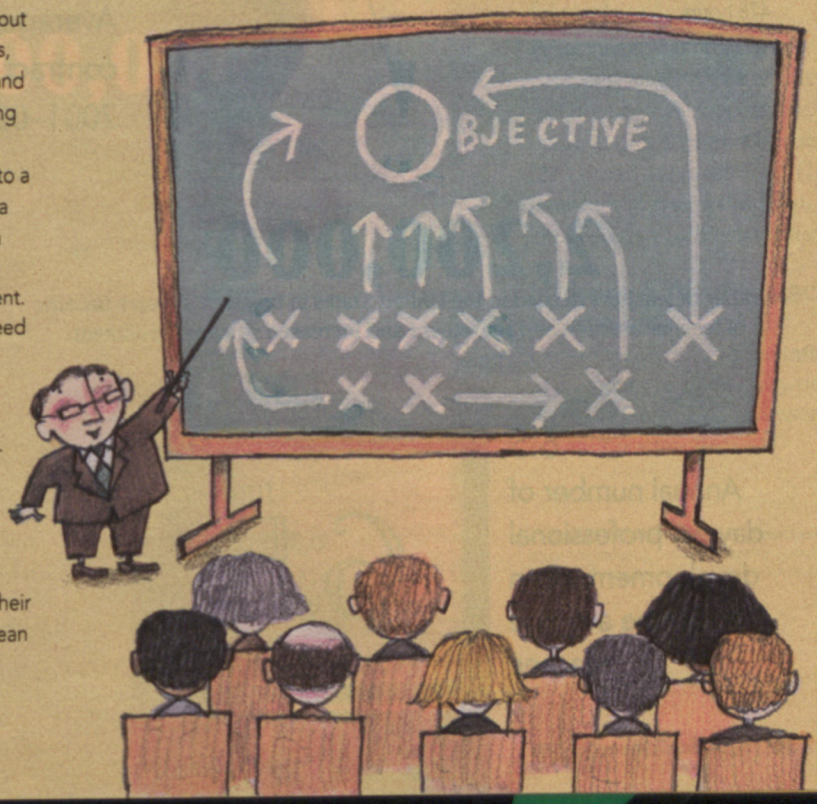


ILLUSTRATION: G. BRIAN KARAS

Teachers

28%

HOW MANY: 3 million teachers work in the nation's K–12 public schools.
AGE: The average teacher is 44 years old.
LEVEL: elementary (53%), middle or junior high school (22%), and senior high school (25%)
SPECIALTY: Regular classroom teacher (73%), special education (11%), instructional specialist or resource teacher (8%)

27

Percentage of teachers who have 25 or more kids in their class.

1,121

Number of annual hours taught by the average upper secondary school teacher in the United States. That far exceeds the totals for New Zealand (950), Scotland (893), the Netherlands (867), Australia (803), or Ireland (735). In Japan—frequently cited as a model—upper secondary teachers taught an average of 478 hours.

50

Number of hours per week the average teacher spends on all teaching duties.

44,683

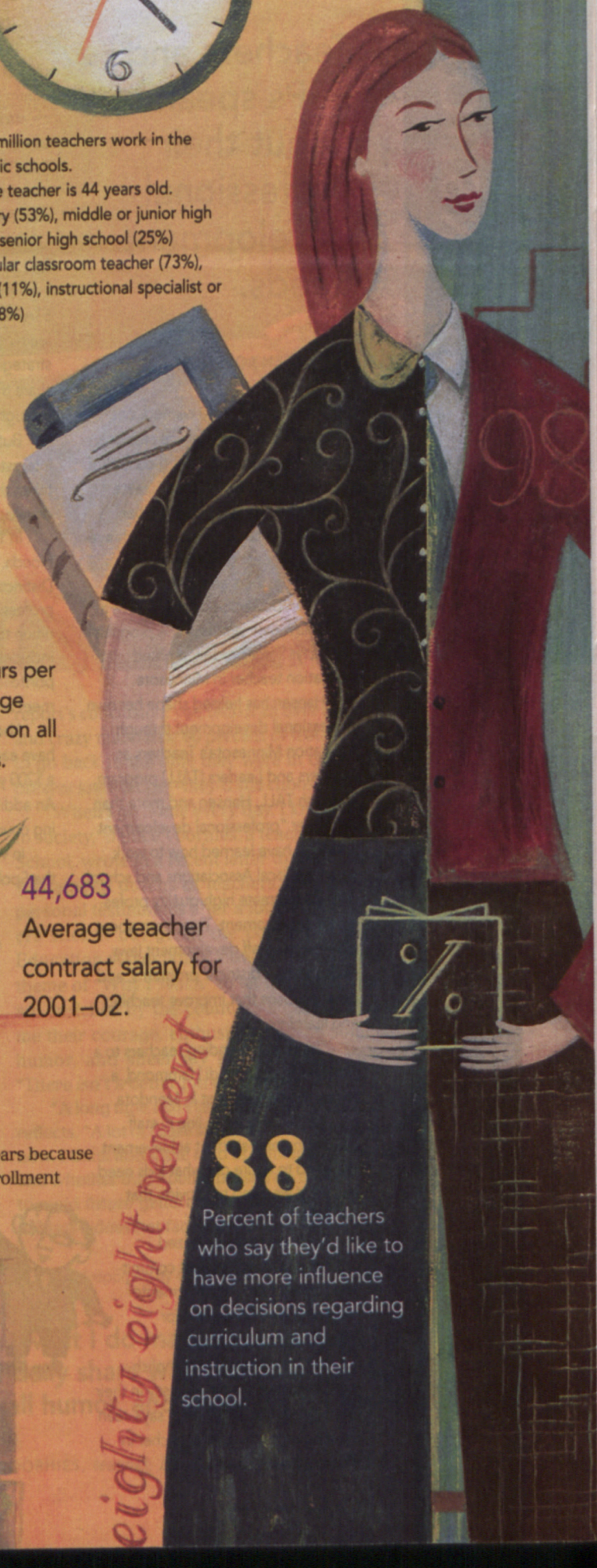
Average teacher contract salary for 2001–02.

2,200,000

Number of teachers needed in the United States in the next 10 years because of teacher attrition and retirement and increased student enrollment

6.5

Annual number of days of professional development taken by the average teacher.



88

Percent of teachers who say they'd like to have more influence on decisions regarding curriculum and instruction in their school.

ty-one

ESPs

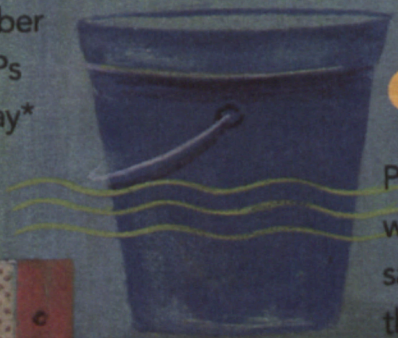
HOW MANY: Nearly 3 million education support professionals work in the public schools, 75 percent of them at the K–12 level.

AGE: The average age of ESPs is 49 years old*

SPECIALTY: ESP jobs include paraeducators (46%), food services (9%), transportation (11%), custodial (9%), clerical (17%), health & student services (3%), security (1%), trades (2%), and technical services (2%).*

6.7

Average number of hours ESPs work each day*



98

Percent of ESPs who report being satisfied with their jobs*

80

Percent of ESPs who live in the communities where they work*

31,000,000,000

Number of square feet of floors custodians sweep, mop, and wax each year

71, percent of paraeducators who work with special education students*

41

Percent of bus drivers who say student management is their greatest job challenge

$11.89

Average hourly wage among all ESPs for 2001–02 (skilled trade workers make the most at $15.44, while food service workers make the least at $10.70)*

*Based on NEA ESP members

ILLUSTRATION: JO TRONIC

Fast Facts

Highlights from NEA's Status of the American Public School Teacher 2000–2001.

A run on parchment

Fifty percent of you hold a master's as your highest degree attained; 43 percent have a bachelor's. Five percent hold National Board Certification.

Make mine an antacid

Stomach growling? Better eat quickly—you get an average of 32 minutes for lunch.

Those crayons and glue DO add up

You spend an average of $443 out-of-pocket to meet the needs of your students.

Surf and ye shall find

Eighty-six percent of you have Web/Internet access at school. That's grown from 35 percent in 1996.

A little help from my friends

What helps you most in providing your best service as a teacher? More teachers name "cooperative, competent teacher colleagues" (22%) than administrators (12%), materials and supplies (7%), or knowledge of subject matter (17%).

Is there a future teacher in your class?

One-third of you cite the influence of a teacher in elementary or secondary school as a reason for becoming a teacher.

SOURCE: NEA RESEARCH, 2003.

SOURCES FOR "BY THE NUMBERS": NEA, NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS, ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT, AND PUBLIC AGENDA.

The Grand Alliance

NEA members team up with parents to get preschoolers off to a good start and to put dads front and center in their kids' education.

BY MARY ANNE HESS

Katy Smith's work is part of a multi-million dollar statewide effort, while Terry Waldron wages a one-man campaign on a shoestring budget, but both are fighting what many believe to be the crucial battle of American education: getting more parents involved in their children's education.

According to a recent NEA survey, members overwhelmingly think the key to improving education is to increase parents' sense of responsibility and involvement. Judging by their passion for their work, it's clear that Waldron and Smith agree.

Smith, a member of the Winona Education Association, focuses on the crucial years before parents deliver their children to the kindergarten teacher. Waldron works with fathers, who all too often stay out of their kids' education.

Smith works with parents in the Minnesota Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) program, launched in 1974 and now reaching into all of Minnesota's 343 school districts, enrolling 45 percent of families with preschoolers.

Originally a social worker, Smith linked up with ECFE back in 1985 when she was looking for a place to meet other new mothers in Winona. She liked it so much that she became a licensed parent educator herself.

Now part of a four-person ECFE team in Winona Area Public Schools, Smith connects with parents of young children from newborn through preschool in weekly classes dealing with

Katy Smith (above) helps parents give their children the vital preparation they need before kindergarten.

PHOTO: LORI ESCHWEILER

everything from story time to discussions on violent video games. Fees are about $20 per quarter or based on a parent's ability to pay.

Each ECFE session starts with a parent/child activity. It's often a time for Smith to model what doesn't always come naturally—how to read to children and even how to get down on the floor and play. "It doesn't matter how affluent you are," she says. "So many parents are making it up as they go along." With little time for reflection, it's a struggle for some to get from one naptime to the next, she adds.

After the initial activity, preschoolers spend an hour at play with an early-childhood educator while parents, often with babies in arms, snag time to talk about child behavior problems, safety, multiple intelligences, and other pertinent topics.

Smith also runs gym nights for working parents and their children, classes for immigrant families, and a special group for parents who identify themselves as "at risk" for abusive behavior because of their own childhood traumas. Yet these aren't the only parents who may need help. Sleep deprivation can cloud anyone's judgment, she says.

For parents new to the United States, ECFE sponsors the ESL Family School, a bridge between cultures. "Small children are a wonderful way to get big people into a building," says Smith. Topics range from immunizations to parent-teacher conferences. There are also English-language classes.

Located in a former school building, Winona's ECFE program gives toddlers a painless introduction to school, helping them see it as a safe, good place to be. Youngsters line up, share, and play in the gym. By kindergarten, they're veterans.

When parents start out with negative feelings stemming from their own educations, Smith says ECFE can turn them around: "They become comfortable walking into a school."

Smith also takes ECFE on the road to rural sites and to local businesses, where she leads lunchtime discussions for employees. And she's always looking for new ways to reach still more parents. Some, she says, may steer clear of ECFE's "feel-good," group interaction approach and prefer something more analytical. So she's started an "Ask a Parent Educator" section on the ECFE Web site: www.rschooltoday.com/se3bin/clientgenie.cgi.

Building long-term relationships is what ECFE is all about. On average, families participate from four to seven years, but Smith knows one large family that spent almost 20 years in the program. But, no matter how long they stay, "we have a hard time when the kids leave for kindergarten," Smith laughs.

MALE MODELS

Terry Waldron proves that one person can make a difference. A high school art teacher in rural Sparta, Illinois, Waldron was inspired to enter the fray in the summer of 2000 at a federal Safe and Drug-Free Schools Conference. Armed with a new understanding of the importance of fathers in their kids' lives, he launched the Sparta Fatherhood Initiative, four Saturday mornings a year when dads and kids enjoy food and fun together and the adults then get time alone to tackle parenting and education issues. "Donuts with Dad" was his first attempt. It drew 86 participants. A year later, "Fishin' with Father" attracted 155 who cast their lines in a downpour.

Before setting up his program, Waldron heard ominous reports from his elementary school colleagues about a decline in parent involvement. In Sparta, 40 percent of the students qualify for free and reduced lunch and the closing of the coal mines has forced many to work at McDonald's and Wal-Mart. Finding the time and energy to help their children with school is hard for these parents, especially since, Waldron notes, "Many parents who remain in the area weren't that successful in school themselves."

"Traditional gender roles are always an issue," he says. "The fathers tend to think moms take kids to school, go to PTA and parent conferences. I say to them, 'You can do that! Don't assume it's the mom's job.'" He also emphasizes reading. "I tell them to let their kids see them pick up a magazine."

Surrogate dads—grandfathers, uncles, or even community volunteers—sometimes accompany kids to the program.

And Waldron sees progress: More men are coming to parent conferences and helping out with reading and math in the elementary school.

Waldron has received small grants to keep the program going, and he also charges $1 to $3 for the sessions. Other Sparta educators, other community volunteers, and local businesses have joined the effort.

"THE FATHERS tend to think moms take kids to school, go to PTA and parent conferences. I tell them, 'You can do that! Don't assume it's the mom's job.'" – TERRY WALDRON

Terry Waldron huddles with a dad at a Sparta Fatherhood Initiative event. The program, run on a shoestring, helps fathers learn to help their children in school.

Waldron doesn't exclude mothers and he's even done a "Muffins with Mom" program. But his main goal is for kids to see male role models. "The kids know me as 'The Dad Guy,'" says Waldron, with more than a hint of satisfaction in his voice.

FOR MORE on these programs, contact Betty Cooke, ECFE education specialist at betty.cooke@state.mn.us and Terry Waldron at artman@egyptian.net. nea

PHOTO: CHRISTIAN GOODEN

Reaching Out

Student and active members get down and dirty at Outreach to Teach.

BY KRISTEN LOSCHERT

When it comes to school improvement, NEA members aren't afraid to get their hands dirty. Residents of Garyville, Louisiana, witnessed that firsthand in June when nearly 300 members spent a day cleaning, painting, and planting at the St. John Child Development Center. The event, known as Outreach to Teach, targets a different high-needs school each year in the host city for the NEA Representative Assembly.

"It's an exceptional experience where soon-to-be teachers, current teachers, ESPs, and retirees can truly make a difference," says Dawn Shephard, chairperson of the NEA Student Program, which sponsors the event. "Whenever we do something to advance a school, we make the community better and that enhances the level of education the students receive." The NEA Student Program provides resources and support to 60,000 preservice teachers on more than 900 college campuses.

"I THOUGHT it would be a great thing to go into a school like this and see a complete transformation in one day..." – CHARLES SMITH

For seven hours volunteers painted classrooms and hallways; planted trees, flowers, and shrubs; decorated bulletin boards; organized storage areas; and even created a teachers' lounge at the school, which is located about 30 miles from New Orleans.

"I thought it would be a great thing to go into a school like this and see a complete transformation in one day," says Charles Smith, a retired science teacher from Jefferson County, Alabama. "To me there's nothing more rewarding."

The program gives preservice teachers hands-on experience in a school. It also helps them connect with students and parents in the local community, says Laquitta Walker, a Student Program member at Georgia Perimeter College.

"They see that you're not just a teacher in the classroom Monday through Friday," Walker says. "They see you as someone who cares about their neighborhood."

Outreach to Teach started in 1996, when a group of 35 Student Program leaders organized a school beautification project during the Student Leadership Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. Since then, attendees of the annual Student and NEA-Retired conferences, along with other NEA members, have volunteered at a local school during the week preceding the Representative Assembly.

All schools chosen for the project qualify as Priority Schools or have other tremendous needs, says Malcolm Staples, organizational specialist for the NEA Student Program. Through its Priority Schools Initiative, NEA provides resources and support to low-performing schools. At the St. John Child Development Center, which serves 250 preschool students, 99 percent of the children participate in the federal free and reduced price breakfast and lunch programs.

By improving the school environment, beautifying the grounds, and enhancing the appearance of the facility, Outreach to Teach builds morale, which ultimately impacts student achievement, Staples says. The program works with community members and local affiliates of the Urban League, NAACP, the National Council of La Raza, and the Organization of Chinese Americans as well to gain support for the project and maintain the facility improvements, Staples says. The Parent Teacher Association at the St. John Child Development Center also committed to maintaining the improvements, he adds.

Outreach to Teach helped N.W. Harllee Elementary School in Dallas, Texas, during the 2002 RA. Since then, the Texas State Teachers Association has supported the school, which has become a popular after-school playground for children in the area. Next summer, volunteers will target a school in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area during the 2004 Student Leadership Conference.

"It's great to get out in the community and help schools that really need it," says Mike Mackie, an elementary education major from Eastern Connecticut State University. "If teachers participate more in projects like this it will spread the word. And maybe all those schools that really need the help will get it."

Left: **Gerald Wilkins** helps plant. Opposite: Volunteers who helped paint, plant, and clean included (clockwise from top left) **Chrissy Woods; Kimberly Adams** and **Clinton Gill; Vicki Parsons** and **Ben Kennedy; Sara Malkin;** other NEA members; and **Austin** and **Destin Watkins** (whose grandma works in the school cafeteria).

PHOTOS: CHUCK COOK

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IPNT0903

Making a Great Public School

A commitment to meaningful reform is put to the test in an urban New Jersey district.

Lincoln Annex elementary, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, faces the challenges of any urban school. But if educators at this K–4 facility get it right, Lincoln may soon look like something out of the leafiest of suburbs.

Lincoln staffers have a green light—through a formal agreement of the school board, the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA), and the New Brunswick Education Association (NBEA)—to demonstrate how *any* neighborhood school can become a "Great Public School" through reforms such as smaller class sizes, family involvement, and meaningful professional development.

With its population of some 200 low-income students (82 percent Latino and 16 percent African American) drawn from the surrounding neighborhood, Lincoln is as real-life a demonstration site as they come.

No less real is the teaching force, a blend of seasoned vets and new teachers, many holding "alternative route" certification.

Lincoln teachers and education support professionals (ESPs) work under the standard NBEA bargaining agreement, put in long hours, and enjoy but one perk: the support of an NJEA staff team specializing in every area from education research to professional development.

These Girl Scouts benefit from teachers who just "don't give up."

Through extensive NJEA training and inclusive decision making—via a 12-member school leadership team—staffers spent the 2002–03 school year building a solid foundation for their five-year "Academy Project at Lincoln Annex."

The project officially begins in September, when baseline data have been compiled and teachers start action research projects. But *NEA Today* visited Lincoln for a preview, and initial progress is encouraging. Some indicators:

❖ **Families are getting involved.** Collaborating with school-family liaison Marlon Osuna, Lincoln Annex teachers and ESPs have worked overtime on outreach activities, including a United Nations Night and a Cinco de Mayo celebration, to build parents' comfort level with the school and make them real "stakeholders." Parents can even use the school's washer and dryer for free if they agree to spend the "spin" time in their children's classrooms.

❖ **Students stay out of trouble and get more attention.** Teachers, paraeducators, and principal Mary Jane McDonald all report that Lincoln Annex's smaller class sizes, averaging 15 students, make for fewer disciplinary problems. "If a kid does cartwheels in class he just doesn't have an audience!" says para Allison Karakowski.

"Smaller classes mean more attention to each student," notes community resident Tim Otero. "Mrs. Youssef knows every student in my sister Kayla's class, and that helps them do well in school."

In this environment, "you really get to each child's strengths and weaknesses," observes Title I remedial reading and math teacher Catherine Mooney. "When I come into a classroom, the teacher can quickly tell me where I should focus my work."

❖ **Teachers have more ways to teach.** With smaller classes and training tailored to practitioner needs, "we can bring a broader range of materials to students," stresses floating reading/language arts teacher Harriett Johnson, a 30-year veteran.

A smaller class allows for special projects, "makes kids active participants in learning," and enables them to learn real-life skills, adds new teacher Sofia Palfey. She's teaching her first graders how to read a restaurant menu and even getting each of them to outline, write, and bind a book, using as a model a book she produced at their age.

❖ **Students are learning—and loving it.** "The teachers here don't give up; it's all about the kids," enthuses Tito Lopez, the father of two Lincoln Annex students. "They stay on top of the kids. My son can't stay focused, so the teacher gives him stuff in short bites and makes sure I stay on top of him at home."

Lopez' daughter, Sha'asia, says she loves participating in classroom math and science experiments and Lincoln's after-school Girl Scout troop—one of the school's four clubs. Those Girl Scouts, by the way, none of whom spoke English when school began, all became English speakers in less than a year.

Keep an eye on this school.

—DAVE WINANS

FOR MORE, contact Susanne Clark at **susanne_clark@nbps.k12.nj.us** or Mary Jane McDonald at **maryjane_mcdonald@nbps.k12.nj.us.**

PHOTO: DAVE WINANS

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VBNT0903

Presenting a United Front

New York members negotiate a powerful contract and gain 'newfound respect.'

The contract that Lynn Romanick, president of the Baldwinsville Educational Support Professionals Association (BESPA) in New York, signed in April featured some extraordinary gains: an across the board 4.5 percent salary increase, increased longevity stipends, better medical insurance coverage, increased pay for summer school employees, and release time for the Association president.

Not bad. In fact, in these times, the gains are pretty amazing. What's more, bargaining proceeded smoothly. The district approached the local last fall for negotiations. Then, after only four meetings, the local had a tentative agreement—three months before its existing contract would expire.

The gains realized in this new contract wouldn't have happened without the hard work and solidarity BESPA members exhibited three years ago.

Back then, the average salary among members of the local, which represents clerical staff, paraeducators, and school nurses, was $16,500. (It's now about $19,400.) But more than half of BESPA's 227 members earned less than $16,000 a year. Ninety-nine percent of the members worked full-time positions, but still couldn't earn a living wage. Many worked second and third jobs to survive. Others worked 10 to 15 hours of weekly overtime for the school district without any extra compensation.

Lynn Romanick led her members in a successful fight for better wages.

"Our mean salary was the second lowest in the state," says Romanick, a teaching assistant at McNamara Elementary School. "More than 60 percent of my members were below the poverty level for a family of three. We realized it was a do or die situation."

So in April 2000, BESPA went to the bargaining table asking for a salary increase, longevity stipends, and a paid lunch for the clerical staff—the only job group not compensated for their lunch time. Members picketed school board meetings and open houses to bring awareness to their issues. But the school system wasn't listening. After more than a year of negotiations, the two sides reached an impasse.

"As time went on the members gained strength," says Romanick. "It was a typical situation of they're mad as hell and they're not going to take it anymore."

Clerical staff stopped working beyond the 37.5 hours for which they were paid. Paraeducators stopped attending evening open houses and parent meetings on their own time. Everyone wore buttons and T-shirts of support and teachers joined the ESPs on the picket lines outside the schools. Meanwhile, parents and Association members wrote letters to the local newspaper highlighting the contributions ESPs make in the schools.

"The one thing that impressed me was when Lynn said, 'We don't want to get rich, we just want to get a living wage' and I think that turned the tide," says Stephanie Mitchell, a secretary at Ray Middle School and member of the negotiation team. "We had to be united and it made a great impact."

Finally, after almost two years of negotiations, the district offered a new contract. The ESPs received a 4.65 percent salary increase each year of the three-year contract. With the added longevity stipends, some members received as much as a 40 percent increase in their overall salary. Clerical staff also received a paid lunch, which amounted to an additional 5.25 percent salary increase.

"The administration has a newfound respect for this local and an appreciation for what they do for the children in Baldwinsville," says UniServ Director Susan Sinicropi.

The ESPs still feel the effects of that monumental negotiation as well, Romanick adds. They now receive overtime pay. More members also serve as Association building reps and on the various school district committees. Most importantly, the local, which used to carry a significant number of agency fee payers, now has 100 percent membership among the job groups it represents.

"It's amazing to see how many people are involved now. Morale is so much better than it was before," Romanick says. "There's also an awareness of what NEA is now. We've come a long way in connecting our members with the organization."

—KRISTEN LOSCHERT

More ESP stories in this issue:

- **Meet Martin Meyer, ESP of the Year** – *Page 49*
- **ESPs focus on professional development** – *Page 29*
- **Vermont ESPs tackle living wage issues** – *Page 12*
- **Check out new resources for ESPs** – *Page 63*

PHOTO: JIM COMMENTUCCI

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DTNT0903

Should summer vacation be split into shorter breaks year-round?

YES

My school has a year-round schedule and we love it! We have July off, a week and a half off in October, an extra week added to our February break, and a week tacked onto the Memorial Day weekend.

During these breaks, students may opt to go on vacation or attend five-day "Intersessions," which are theme-based educational experiences taught by teachers. (For example, last May we spent a week studying and participating in field trips about outer space.) Our popular Intersessions cost $90—much cheaper than day care! Typically, a third to a half of our students participate.

Our calendar reduces the loss of learning that can occur during a long summer vacation and leaves both students and staff happy and refreshed.

PATTI LAREAU Third-grade teacher, Orion, Michigan

My school's calendar gives us a summer that's just three weeks shorter than the rest of the district, which still provides plenty of time for vacations, camps, summer school, etc.

The students don't lose as much content or routine with our shorter summer, yet return to school rested and ready to learn. The three weeks are split between two (heavenly!) weeks in October—a perfect time to travel—and a well-timed week in April.

MAUREEN MEDEIROS Elementary school teacher, Cupertino, California

I taught two years in Kenya, which models its educational system after the British. We taught January to March and had April off; May through July and had August off; finally, September through November with December off. It was fabulous to never get bone weary and also to have sustained holidays in different seasons. (Of course they're on the Equator. It was merely wet and dry, but here it would be three separate seasons.) Would that we could all do it.

But it wouldn't work unless the whole state did it because team and camp schedules would not be aligned and teachers who live in one district and teach in another might have children on a different schedule and have to pay for child care while they finish out the term. Not being in sync is a bummer.

GAY JOHNSON Elementary school teacher, Birmingham, Alabama

NO

I have many objections to losing my traditional summer vacation.

As a teacher, I will no longer be able to take summer college courses toward my master's degree.

As a working parent, I suddenly need daycare for two weeks every nine weeks. Daycare centers aren't set up to accommodate this.

As a former elementary school child, my fondest summer memories are of 4-H and Girl Scout camp. There are no longer options since we are still in school!

As a high school student, I really, really need to work that summer job to save for college. What do I do now?

And, as all of the above, I am exhausted and need time off to recharge!

AMY DEGRELLA Elementary art teacher and mother of three, Wilson County, Tennessee

I teach in a very small rural school. The long summer is necessary here because of the huge need for summer farm help from students 13 and up.

COLLETTE JACOBS Math and physics instructor, Yates Center, Kansas; wife of farmer who employs students

I must work over the summer to keep up with family bills. If there were shorter breaks, I would not be able to have a job while school is not in session. For those of you who like to take summer vacations, this could affect you, too.

ERIN SULLENGER In-school suspension classroom assistant, Fenton, Missouri

Here in Pennsylvania, we only have warm weather for a few months of the year. After long, cold winters, teachers and students alike yearn to be outdoors. Most of us would much rather have breaks when the weather is nice than during the cold when we would be cooped up inside.

AMY MCKAVENEY High school math teacher, Allison Park, Pennsylvania

We've just spent two years with multi-track year-round. I haven't found the shorter breaks helpful. The students seem to lose just as much in three weeks as they did in three months and now we have to start over three times instead of once.

TOM SCHULTZ Fifth-grade teacher, Vacaville, California

WHAT'S YOUR OPINION?

Should summer vacation be split into shorter breaks year-round?
To vote, visit our Web site at www.nea.org/neatoday and see the results instantly.

Should high school start at 9 a.m.?
The tally on the question in the last *NEA Today*:
75% Yes 25% No

Should students raise money for their schools?
If you'd like to take part in this future Debate, send a brief note to Alain Jehlen, **ajehlen@nea.org**.

PHOTOS: PHOTODISC; IMAGE CONSTRUCTION: GROFF CREATIVE, INC.

How do you get students **geared up** for the new school year?

Peer Leaders

At our high school, juniors and seniors work with freshmen for six weeks after the year begins and with eighth graders for six weeks in the spring. These "Peer Leaders" are trained in group dynamics and active listening. They work in small groups and discuss issues such as managing time, academic integrity, and social choices.

In May, eighth graders tour the high school with their Peer Leaders. They also get a handbook with information on grades, honor roll requirements, and mental health concerns. Peer Leaders call each soon-to-be-freshman in August to answer questions and allay anxiety.

PEGGY HANSELMAN School counselor and peer leadership advisor, New Hope, Pennsylvania

Bingo Board

I have worked with a wide variety of teachers at the start of the school year. I think the most successful activities include ways for the teacher to get to know the students and for students to get to know each other.

For example, create a Bingo board with items such as: went on vacation this summer, has two sisters, favorite subject is math. Give students an opportunity to find people to sign each square.

Another idea: Have a class discussion about students' strengths and allow them to find times during the year when they can help teach the lesson.

ANDREA SNOWDEN Student and substitute teacher, St. Louis, Missouri

"TO GET enthusiasm going for the new year, involve students in leadership roles. I offer 'management' positions." –SNOGREN

The Four Agreements

I use *The Four Agreements* by Don Miguel Ruiz as the foundation for my classroom rules and to motivate each student to find his or her talent and then seek excellence in it (Plato). The fourth agreement is, "Always do your best... and you will avoid self judgment and regret." When I read Ruiz to my students and talk about Plato's *Academy* at the beginning of the year, my students become intrinsically motivated.

STANETTE KLATT Middle school science teacher, Astoria, Oregon

Boarding Pass

Every summer, I send my new students a theme-based welcome letter. Last year, I used a train. I told about the "scheduled stops" awaiting them. I enclosed a "Boarding Pass" for them to bring in so they could hop on the Third Grade Express and get a surprise. I figured if someone didn't have a pass, I'd say the train was late and they should bring it the next day. But I was lucky—they all had passes. The surprise was alphabet cookies using T, R, A, I, and N.

HEIDI WAGNER Third-grade teacher, Harrisonville, New Jersey

Activity Packets

I have the same set of students for three years. At the end of each year, I assemble packets of activities they can do over the summer. The choice is theirs, to do or not to do! But I tell students and parents that those who do them will get extra credit. Many return at the start of the new school year with packets in hand!

CAROLYN DOTTS Special education teacher, Spruce Pine, North Carolina

Job Opening

One way to get enthusiasm going for the new year is to involve students in leadership roles. I offer "management" positions. Students write a paragraph telling why they would be the best person for the job. I have posters with job qualifications and responsibilities. When there is a lot of interest, I choose an assistant manager.

Two examples among many: a Computer Manager, who makes sure students get their turns fairly and the machines are used at the appropriate times, and a Library Manager, who reminds students to return books, straightens the library, and waters the plants.

Students help come up with enough jobs for everyone who wants one. "Pay" is the chance to be "in charge" and the occasional donut at the managers' monthly meeting.

A big plus for me is that the jobs get done, even when I'm interrupted by a parent stopping in.

LINDA SNOGREN Fifth-grade teacher, Midland, Michigan

Party!

I have a "New Year's Party." I buy theme napkins, etc. on clearance after January 1 and save them until the start of the school year. We celebrate being in a new grade and our goals.

ARLEEN LOPEZ Fifth-grade teacher, Davenport, Iowa

GOT AN ANSWER?

How do you deal with a wide range of abilities in one class?

E-mail your answer to **dilemma2@list.nea.org**. Or send by regular mail, or fax to 202-822-7206. Include your name, city, state, and job. If published, you will receive an *NEA Today* mug!

ILLUSTRATION: TED PITTS

CALLING ALL COSMETOLOGY TEACHERS

I teach cosmetology. This is my 30th year teaching and working in this field, and I would like to start a listserv on which cosmetology teachers could swap ideas and experiences. Anybody interested? Send me an e-mail message: **beautyprofessor@hotmail.com.** –FARZANA HANIF
Dade City, Florida

Struggling Multipliers

I have several students who are really struggling with memorizing their multiplication facts. Can anyone suggest ways to help these students?
–REBECCA HUBBELL
Fourth- to sixth-grade teacher
Chico, California

A Lift to Learning

OUR MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS work very hard to teach the Arizona Standards of Instruction, but we need to motivate our kids to do better. Intrinsic motivation only goes so far. We welcome any ideas that have proven successful.
–MILLIE BENTLEY, *Sunnyside, Arizona*

ANSWER: LIKE THE OTHER TEACHERS IN my department, I have the state language arts standards posted in my ninth-grade classroom. When we give students an assignment, we show them where it is in the standards. My grades are set up by standard. To pass, students have to meet the benchmark for that standard—very different than averaging their grades, as I used to do. Students realize they are working to acquire a specific skill, rather than to earn points. Learning and retention are up! –ROBIN AXWORTHY,
Paramount, California

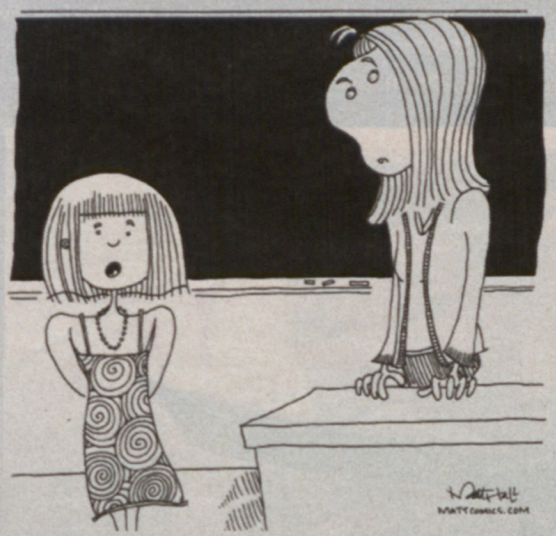
Teacher's Pets

I'm a new second-grade teacher and would like to ask if anyone has lessons on pets?
–AMY CROSTON
Howard County, Virginia

ANSWER: I got a whole unit on pets from my local animal shelter. I suggest that you contact yours. They also came out and taught lessons on various aspects of animals—pet care, area wild animal info, etc.
–KAY C. MAST
Third-grade teacher
Harrison District
Colorado Springs, Colorado

FAMILY LITERACY CENTER

I am a new Title I teacher starting a Family Literacy Center. I will be using an empty classroom. I want it to be a place where parents can feel comfortable coming to check out games and books and learn how to help their children. I would appreciate hearing how other people have implemented this kind of program. I have some ideas, but I need more.
–JOY MALONE
Roseburg, Oregon



"Before giving my report, I want to say my dress is by Vivace, my shoes by Gelding and Strauss, my accessories by the Shantz Collection, and my hair and make-up is by J. Cuthright."

Share your wisdom, ask your question!

What's the best holiday gift you've ever given or received at work?

Send your answer to this or other questions on this page to **ajehlen@nea.org.** Or, send us a question you'd like to see posted. Please include your name, your job, and the community and state where you work.

For a weekly e-mail of questions, answers, and practical classroom tips, join Works4Me, one of NEA's most popular and useful services. Just send the message "subscribe Works4Me" (without the quotation marks) to **Lyris@list.nea.org.**

PHOTOS: PHOTODISC. CENTER ILLUSTRATION: ART VALERO

Teacher of The Year

Betsy Rogers can't remember a time when she didn't want to teach.

AS A CHILD, she lined up her dolls in front of a chalkboard to play school. Family stories about her grandmother's teaching experiences provided additional inspiration.

Now Rogers, the 2003 Teacher of the Year, hopes her story will inspire others to teach, especially in high-poverty schools.

"I would love to see us get our best teachers in our neediest schools," says Rogers, a first- and second-grade teacher. "The reward is the difference you can make for the children."

For most of her 22-year career, Rogers has taught at Leeds Elementary School, a Title I school in rural Jefferson County, Alabama. As a beginning teacher, Rogers says she was unaware of the extreme poverty and sometimes abusive home lives her students faced. So she made her classroom a nurturing environment where her students could concentrate on learning.

Rogers pioneered a program that groups students with the same teacher during first and second grades. The approach provides stability and recognizes that all students don't learn in the same way or at the same time, she says. Consequently, Rogers has more freedom to develop teaching strategies to suit her students' individual learning styles.

"Each child is like a rosebud," says Rogers, quoting her own first-grade teacher. "They don't always bloom at the same time, but the last bloom is just as pretty as the first."

—KRISTEN LOSCHERT

Honor Thy Father

School psychologist Tim Dwyer would do just about anything for his dad—even face down Hell's Gate.

IN JULY, Dwyer embarked on a seven-day tribute to his late father as he kayaked nearly 300 miles around Long Island to raise awareness for Alzheimer's disease. During the journey, Dwyer endured hours of endless paddling and blistered hands as he traveled along the East River. He encountered the most treacherous part of his trip the first day: a section of whirlpools and currents so strong local boaters dubbed it Hell's Gate. "My father passed away from Alzheimer's, and this was a way to honor and acknowledge my father as well as do a sport that I love," says Dwyer, a national kayak champion from Jamestown, Rhode Island.

Dwyer spent almost a year training for the event, sponsored by the Long Island Alzheimer's Foundation (LIAF). He hopes his efforts bring attention to the support services that organizations such as LIAF offer patients and their families.

"When my father had the disease, there were none of those services available. My mother had to deal with it all alone," he says. "Now, the quality of life is better for those families involved with the Foundation. I want that for everyone who has the disease."

—K.L.

PHOTOS TOP: JEFF ROBERTS; BOTTOM: KRIS CRAIG

ESP of the Year

"I've always believed my role as custodian was to support the teachers and the other support personnel in anything they needed to do to make sure kids learn," says Martin Meyer, head custodian at Fernan Elementary School in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. "I've felt that I need to be of service."

FOR MEYER, the 2003 NEA Education Support Professional of the Year, service means much more than tending to the physical and aesthetic needs of his school building.

Meyer serves his fellow ESPs as treasurer of the Coeur d'Alene Education Association, a wall-to-wall local where he is the first ESP to hold a leadership role.

He lobbies state and national legislators for increased funding for public education and speaks out about the need for bargaining rights for ESPs. He has pushed the local school board to improve its staffing policy for school custodians and mobilized parents to lobby their legislators. But Meyer's favorite activity is singing and playing his guitar for the preschool and kindergarten students at his school. Hearing the students sing along makes all the hard work worth it.

"I just take things one day at a time," he says. "If you don't let the negative things build up, you can enjoy the positives—and there are a lot of positive things in education."

—K.L.

Behind Locked Doors

Retired South Carolina member Fannie Simmons takes to the radio waves each week with information and inspiration for county jail inmates.

A FEW YEARS BACK, Simmons was saddened when she went to visit a relative in the Marion County Jail. "I saw in prisoners' faces what confinement had done to them," says Simmons. "And these were not faces of hope."

So Simmons vowed to reach out to jail inmates. She contacted the manager of a local radio station that broadcasts gospel music and religious programming, who gave her the green light to create a program to serve the inmates.

Two years later, Simmons' show, "Behind Locked Doors," broadcasts each Saturday on WJAY radio in Mullins, South Carolina. Simmons reads inspirational poetry, some of which she writes, and interviews guests with advice or encouragement for inmates.

Simmons meets inmates who listen to her show when she volunteers to teach Sunday school at the jail. She says they've expressed their gratitude to her, as have other members of the community—some of whom ask for copies of her poems. "I feel like I'm helping," says Simmons. "Making a difference for people with tough lives makes me feel better about myself."

—MATT SIMON

GOT A TIP?

Do you have an interesting story idea? Contact Kristen Loschert, section editor, at **kloschert@nea.org.**

PHOTO TOP: JESSE TINSLEY; BOTTOM: DAVID ACKERMAN

Join the NEA Fitness Challenge!

Summer's over. You've vegged on the beach, camped under the stars, trekked through amusement parks, and hosted a zillion backyard barbecues. Feeling good? Want to make sure you stay that way as the stress of the school year mounts? Well, have we got a plan for you!

BY SHEREE CRUTE

This year, *NEA Today* and the NEA Health Information Network (NEA HIN) have joined up to launch our first **NEA Fitness Challenge.** We've brought together a team of experts who have designed a yearlong wellness program uniquely for you. The only thing you have to do is get psyched, join up with some colleagues, and get on board. You'll challenge yourselves to eat better, move more, and incorporate anti-stress techniques into your school day. You'll even be able to chart your progress, chat with your colleagues, and get your health questions answered on a special Web site. And those who push the hardest can win money for their schools at the end. (Nothing wrong with a little competition, but more of that in November's issue!)

Why do we think this is so important? For starters, more than 60 percent of American adults and nearly 20 percent of our children are overweight or obese, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Rates of obesity among teachers are actually higher than the national average, making many of us even more vulnerable to related diseases like diabetes, hyperten-

Taking the Challenge (above from left): Illinois teachers **Peggy Kell** (Oak Park), **Fabio Cardenas** (Maywood), **Doreen Johnson** (Broadview), and **Laura Urso** (Maywood).

PHOTOS: MATT FERGUSON

sion, and cardiovascular disease. And stress—we don't have to tell you about your risk of that. Yet many of us don't realize how insidious its effects are, says R. Hayman Kite, Ph.D., a specialist in stress reduction in the classroom. "It does its damage slowly," he says, making it not only tougher to do your job, but also damaging your heart and sapping your energy along the way.

But enough bad news. The good news is that when it comes to feeling better, the little things can mean a lot. "If you can lose just 5 to 7 percent of your body weight, you can gain tremendous health benefits," says Christie M. Ballantyne, M.D., of the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. Ballantyne's research on obesity and the impact of moderate weight loss has shown that you can dramatically cut your risk of heart disease and diabetes by dropping 10 to 20 pounds, no matter what you weigh when you begin. And by adding light to moderate exercise, you immediately begin to address the stress.

So let's get started. Find out what to do first (see below). Then turn the page to kick off your year of healthy living. We'll be checking in with you in November.

What To Do First

> **See your doctor** and get his or her OK to start the program.

> **Invest in good running shoes.** The padding is generally better than shoes for walking. Best buys under $100 (suggested by Consumer Reports) are the New Balance 715, $78, or the Adidas Supernova, $90 (great if you pronate).

> **Buy a small notebook** that will be your food diary and an inexpensive paperback calorie counting book that includes carbohydrate and fat content, fast and prepared foods; and a tape measure.

> **Pull together a Challenge team** (of at least two!), because support is critical. Then pick a team reporter to record hours walked, pounds and inches lost.

> **Register your team on our new Web site.** Click on www.neahin.org/challenge to register your team and get directions on how to chart your team's progress, follow your "competition," chat with others taking the Challenge, calculate your obesity risk, count calories, and get answers to your health questions from the experts. Here, you'll find a storehouse of information on health, so make this your friend!

www.neahin.org/challenge

Your Dream Team

A personal trainer, nutritionist, stress reduction expert, and even a meditation teacher—our experts are not only at the top of their fields, they have firsthand knowledge of the problems educators face daily.

C.B. YELVERTON, M.S., an expert in exercise physiology. Yelverton taught in the New York City Schools for 17 years and is now a featured trainer at Eastern Athletic Clubs and owner of Movement Matters, a fitness center in Brooklyn, New York.

MOLLY GEE, M.Ed., R.D., a registered dietician in the Department of Nutrition of Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas. Gee is an expert in moderate weight loss programs.

R. HAYMAN KITE, PH.D., a former teacher, principal, and dean of the school of education at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Florida. Kite now designs and teaches courses on managing classroom related stress for the Teacher Education Institute in Winter Park, Florida.

DEVYA, founder of Devya & Associates, trained at the Himalayan Institute of Yoga, Science and Philosophy and has taught meditation for 15 years. She taught in the New York City schools for seven years.

The Nutrition Challenge

Don't say diet! "This plan is designed to help you develop lifelong healthy eating habits," nutritionist Molly Gee says. But it will also put you in complete control of your effort to maintain a healthy weight or achieve the Challenge goal of losing 5 to 7 percent of your body weight by May. That's the magic number for avoiding Metabolic Syndrome (see "Obesity: Avoiding the Risks").

WEEK ONE

> **GET PSYCHED.** Think about why you want to lose weight or just feel better. Having more energy and living longer are surely two goals that will help you stick it out.

> **SEEK SUPPORT.** Pick a Challenge team member or other friend who can help you when that pint of Häagen-Dazs beckons.

> **TAKE CONTROL.** Clean out the cupboards, and jettison fatty snacks. Be sure you have non-stick pans, measuring spoons, and cups. Slim down family recipes. Cutting 1/3 of the fat and some of the sugar will be barely noticeable. Stop frying foods.

> **TAKE STOCK.** Look at your portion sizes. How much salad dressing are you pouring on? How big was that burger? Learn how to recognize a 4-ounce portion of protein (about the same size as the palm of your hand).

WEEK TWO

> **COUNT 'EM UP.** Using your calorie counter and journal, make a list of what you eat every day for a week and see how many calories you're eating each day. Don't be surprised if you hit 3,000 or more.

> **LEARN TO GRAZE.** Try to have a small meal or healthy snack every four to five hours. It will help speed up your metabolism and keep your appetite under control. Be sure to close the kitchen after dinner.

> **TAKE YOUR TIME.** Eat slowly, over a 20-minute period, so that your body has time to let you know you've eaten enough before you wolf down extra calories.

> **PLAN AHEAD.** Always shop from a list. Sit down and think through your meals for the week and make sure you have plenty of healthy foods on hand. Oh, and never hit the supermarket when you're hungry.

> **PICK A MULTI.** Take a daily multivitamin. Women should invest in a good liquid calcium supplement that gives you at least 1,000 mg a day.

> **CULTIVATE COLOR.** The more colors you eat—red, green, yellow—the more fiber and nutrients you're bound to get.

> **REIN IN RESTAURANT HABITS.** If possible, when dining with others, order your meal first. It helps set the pace for the table. Ask your waiter to split oversize portions and pack up half to take home before he serves your food. Take all butter, sauces, and dressings on the side.

> **COUNT AND CUT.** Use your journal and calorie counter. Record your daily calories and plan to cut 200 calories a day from your diet, each day. You can start the following Monday.

WEEKS THREE & FOUR

> **BEGIN TO TRIM.** Reduce your calories by 200. If you normally eat 3,000, for example, you should now eat 2,800 calories a day.

WEEK FIVE

> **CUT BACK** another 100 calories, to 2,700.

WEEK SIX

> **CUT BACK** another 100 calories. Now, you can stay at this level until November 1.

QUICK TIPS: Trade chips in for pretzels. Ask the school to stock baked chips. Pack a piece of fruit, a low-fat yogurt, pre-packed baby carrots, or even a low-calorie snack bar. Meal replacements are not bad for days you're too busy to eat a regular meal.

Obesity: Avoiding the Risks

Wondering if you're medically "obese"? It doesn't take as much to hit the target as you may think.

If you're 5'6" and weigh 186 pounds, or 6'1" and weigh 227 pounds—you're there. So find out for sure. Doctors say most people who are obese develop something called Metabolic Syndrome (MS), a cluster of risk factors that mean you are on the fast track to developing cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and diabetes. Protecting you from MS is the focus of the Fitness Challenge.

To determine your risk, calculate your BMI. If it's more than 30, review the MS checklist below with your doctor to see if you have three of the five risk factors. To calculate your BMI: Multiply your weight in pounds by 703, then divide this number by your height in inches squared (height x height), or just go to our Web site at www.neahin.org/challenge. You are overweight if your BMI is 25 to 29.9 and obese if it is 30 or more (180 pounds, if you're 5'5").

THE METABOLIC SYNDROME RISK FACTOR CHECKLIST

Waist measurement	40 inches and up for men
	36 inches and up for women
Triglycerides	150 mg
HDL cholesterol	Less than 40 mg for men
	50 mg for women
Fasting glucose	110 mg
Blood pressure	130/85

ILLUSTRATIONS: PHOTODISC

The Walking Challenge

"This walking program will make it easy for Challenge team members to work out together on school property," says C.B. Yelverton. It starts out nice and easy, but it's guaranteed to whittle away fat, pounds, and inches. Be sure to drink eight, 8-ounce glasses of water each day and get 8 hours of sleep each night for the best results. If you're more advanced, walk ahead, but pick a pace that accommodates everyone. It's distance and endurance, not speed, that take off the weight.

STRETCH IT OUT

Don't ignore these! They will help you guard against injury. Use them to warm up and cool down, before and after your walk.

> **HIP CIRCLES:** Stand with feet hip width apart and knees slightly bent. Circle the hips to the right four times and then to the left four times. Repeat three times.

> **QUADRICEPS STRETCH:** Stand erect. Hold onto to a wall for support. Bend knee, reach around and grasp your foot. Pull foot toward your buttocks until you feel the stretch in the front of your thighs. Hold for 30 seconds, then switch.

> **CALF STRETCH:** Lean forward into wall, holding yourself with your arms. Bring one leg forward and bend knee. Extend other leg behind you and press heel down. Keep back straight. Hold 15-30 seconds. Repeat with other leg.

> **ACHILLES STRETCH:** From the calf stretch position, bend the knee of your back leg, keeping the heel on the ground. Then switch legs.

AFTER WALK CRUNCHES

These will help you tighten flabby abs as you slim down, and improve your posture and walking stance. Start with three sets of 10 to 20.

> **BASIC CRUNCH:** Lie on your back with knees bent. Put your hands behind your head and slowly curl up, holding abdominals in, until the upper back is off the floor. Never curl up all of the way and do not pull on your neck.

> **SIDE CRUNCH:** Lie with back flat and knees bent, slowly curl, twisting up toward the right thigh and and back down. Continue on the other side, alternating as you count.

WALKING SCHEDULE

Pick your track. Use the indoor gym, outdoor track, perimeter of your school, or all three. Get together before school, at lunch, or after classes.

September's Goals (begin week two):

> Complete all stretches.

> Shoot for 20 to 30 minute walks three times a week. Keep a continuous pace; it's not a race walk.

> Abdominals: three sets of 10 to 20 basic crunches three times a week.

October's Goals:

> Complete all stretches.

> Walk: 30 to 45 minutes, three to five times a week.

> Abdominals: Do three sets of basic crunches and side crunches, 15 to 25 a set, four times a week.

TIP: Keep track of how much time you walk and take your measurements at the beginning of the program. Don't forget to log this information in at the Challenge site. nea

www.neahin.org/challenge

Sheree Crute is a freelance writer specializing in health. She is based in Brooklyn, New York.

Your Stress Buster

The Challenge plan just wouldn't be complete without advice on managing classroom and job-related stress.

Experts say you can beat work-related stress by addressing it in two ways. As a group, "one of the best things to do is talk to your colleagues," says Irvin Schonfeld, Ph.D, M.P.H., who studies classroom-related occupational stress. "Share advice on difficult students and administrative problems," he advises. Make your workplace a supportive environment.

On a personal level, a variety of easy, anytime exercises can help you reduce your stress levels every day. One of the most effective methods is meditation. Several studies have shown that practicing meditation can lower your blood pressure, reduce your risk of arteriosclerosis, even help you deal with depression and get a better night's sleep.

Over the next few months, you're going to learn lots more about keeping stress under control with meditation and other tools. For now, Devya, a meditation teacher, offers this quick tension taming meditation to do whenever you have your classroom or workspace to yourself.

THE 20-SECOND COOL DOWN

1. **Sit still and quiet.**
2. **Now, inhale, then exhale and count "one" (in your mind), with your exhaled breath. Keep inhaling and exhaling and counting on each exhale, until you reach 10.**
3. **Reverse the count. Keep inhaling and exhaling and reverse the count (10, 9, 8...1).**
4. **If it's a really crazy day, start with 20 or 30.**

resources

54 **Book Excerpt** Success strategies for new secondary teachers.
55 **NEW NEA Professional Library Resources** Books for your kids and help for substitutes.
55 **What's Up At HIN** Indoor air quality and free health care coverage for uninsured children.
56 **NEA Grants** Looking for funding? Then look up these grants.
57 **Books by NEA Members** Student-written math riddles can liven up your math class.
58 **Read Across America** NEA, Random House, and Dr. Seuss team up.
59 **In Print** A new book highlights activities for your favorite picture books.
60 **Diversity Calendar** Festivals, holidays, and noteworthy dates from around the world.
61 **Heads Up From NEA Member Benefits** Your NEA membership benefits update.
62 **OWL.org** Write for OWL.org and make a statement for members.
62 **Take Note** Want to be a UniServ intern? Read on.
63 **On TV** Brush up on your post-impressionistic artists.
65 **Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride** Lend support for immigrants' rights.
65 **On the Web** Online help for science fair projects.

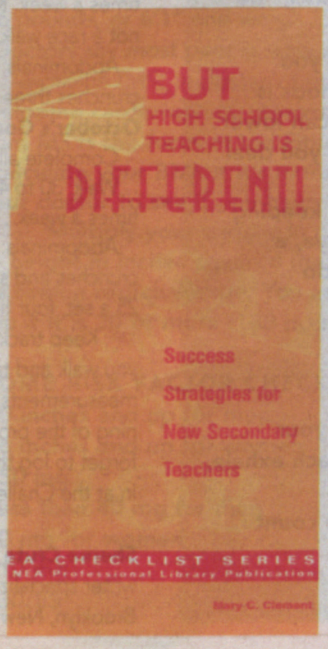
Help for the High School Teacher

But High School Teaching is Different!
Success Strategies for New Secondary Teachers
By Mary C. Clement
NEA Checklist Series
72 pp. $ 5.50 NEA Members, $6.95 nonmembers
NEA Professional Library

[BOOK EXCERPT]

Why did you choose to become a high school teacher?

If you haven't already written a statement of why you want to teach and a statement of your personal philosophy of teaching, take the time to do so now. It's okay to say you want to teach Spanish to every student because you know that a command of a foreign language opens doors to the world. It's okay to say you want to teach your students chemistry so that they can discover cures for rare diseases and win the Nobel Prize. Your philosophy should be lofty. You never have to apologize for your high ideals. In fact, in order to be a teacher you need to have high ideals!



Once you know why you want to be a teacher, and what your teaching philosophy is, you'll have personal guidelines for succeeding as a teacher. Your reasons for teaching and your philosophy can certainly change. . . .

My own philosophy of education, and the reason I continue to be a teacher, is now very simple. I teach because I see the hope an education brings. I teach people to be teachers because I know that our society and our schools need teachers more than ever—and that those teachers have to dispense hope along with their lesson plans. . . .

This book was written for secondary education majors in college and new teachers who are already teaching or preparing to teach in high schools. It was created because much of the material for new teachers is targeted to elementary educators. High school teaching is very different than working with one class of five- to twelve-year-olds all day. High school teachers work with as many as 180 students *per day* and face a myriad of different challenges. Your students drive cars, hold down jobs, and have babies. You're expected to prepare your students for both college and the workplace. You're expected to make your classes relevant and meaningful to prepare students to be successful in "the real world."

Just as we know why people choose to become teachers, we also know that some teachers leave the profession early in their careers. Yet, with the right training and support, teachers go on to complete long careers in the classroom, including the high school classroom.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mary C. Clement was a high school foreign language teacher for eight years before earning her doctorate in curriculum and

Book Excerpt *continued*

instruction from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1991. From 1991 to 1997, she directed the Beginning Teacher Program at Eastern Illinois University. She is currently an associate professor at Berry College in northwest Georgia, where she teaches secondary methods, instructional management, and graduate courses in curriculum, supervision, and mentoring.

Clement's books include *Bright Ideas*, (NEA Professional Library), *Building the Best Faculty*, and *So You Want to be a Teacher?* (Scarecrow Press). Her articles have appeared in *Phi Delta Kappan*, *Principal Leadership*, *Clearinghouse*, *Educational Horizons*, and Kappa Delta Pi's *Record* and *Forum*. nea

NEW NEA PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY RESOURCES

■ **BOOKS YOUR KIDS WILL TALK ABOUT!**
A Guide to Children's Literature for Teachers and Parents (K-6)
By Susan Hepler and Maria Salvadore
136 pp., $19.95 members, $22.95 nonmembers
A comprehensive annotated bibliography that helps parents and educators navigate their way through the expanding universe of children's literature. Each chapter is organized around themes germane to a child's world.

■ **STANDING IN YOUR SHOES**
A Checklist for Classroom and Substitute Teachers
By Doug Provencio
64 pp. $5.50 members, $6.95 nonmembers
Helpful techniques for substitute teachers and classroom teachers using substitutes.

■ **WHEN CHILDREN ARE ABUSED**
An Educator's Guide to Intervention
By Cynthia Crosson-Tower
Co-published by NEA and Allyn & Bacon
200 pp. $21.95 members, $24.95 nonmembers
A valuable guide for educators on identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect.

■ **INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN ASSESSMENTS**
Ways to Make Assessment Work for All Involved
By Martha Thurlow and James Ysseldyke
71 pp. $5.95 members, $7.95 nonmembers
Strategies for successfully including students with disabilities in assessments.

■ **IMPROVING COMPREHENSION:**
10 Researched-based Principles
By Gerald Duffy, Editor
72 pp. $10.95 members, $12.50 nonmembers
Comprehension is the whole point of reading. Whether you're teaching a first-grade reading class or fifth-grade social studies, your students need to be able to understand the meaning behind the words. This straightforward book offers educators 10 research-based guidelines for improving students' ability to build meaning from what they've read.

What's Up at HIN

NEA HIN

Spread the Word About Free and Low-Cost Health Insurance

The start of the school year is a great time for educational staff to help inform parents about the availability of low-cost and free health care coverage for the 8 million uninsured children in the United States. The majority of these children are eligible for Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) but are not enrolled. The NEA Health Information Network (HIN) is a partner of Covering Kids: A National Health Access Initiative for Low-Income, Uninsured Children that was launched by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Covering Kids has developed a *free* Back-to-School Action Kit that includes tips for school-based outreach, bookmarks, posters, stickers, and more! For more, visit www.neahin.org/programs/childhealth/coveringkids.htm.

Clean School Bus Initiative

The U.S. EPA recently launched the Clean School Bus USA initiative to reduce both children's exposure to diesel exhaust and the amount of air pollution created by diesel school buses. For information on anti-idling, school bus retrofitting and replacement, grant opportunities, and how you can be involved in keeping our children and bus drivers healthy, visit www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/index.htm.

Gun Safety

NEA HIN's Gun Safety Campaign is working to fight gun crime in our communities. The Campaign's Web site, www.neahin.org/gunsafety, provides up-to-date resources about initiatives to block criminal access to firearms and support responsible gun ownership. It also contains information about gun crime in each state, including statistics on students found bringing a gun to school.

Connecticut Passes Air Quality Legislation

Children and school staff across the country continue to suffer the adverse health effects of poor indoor air quality (IAQ) in schools. To combat this, parents, educators, and students, including NEA member and NEA HIN IAQ trainee Diane Ethier, testified to the Connecticut legislature to help pass H.R. 6426—legislation to improve the IAQ of Connecticut schools. Ethier serves as vice president of the Canary Committee, a local grassroots organization that helped craft the language of H.R. 6426. To read more about the legislation or the Canary Committee efforts visit www.canarycommittee.com. For more on NEA HIN's IAQ in Schools program, visit www.neahin.org/programs/environmental/index.htm.

NEA URBAN GRANTS PROGRAM

Since 1985, NEA's Urban Grants Program has supported local NEA affiliates in the development of education reform leadership programs for K–12 faculty, education support professionals (ESPs), and higher education school faculty. Each year NEA awards 25 grants of $5,000 each. The programs these locals develop enhance NEA and member leadership in education reform.

All NEA local affiliates of 500 members or more—or the largest local affiliate of any state regardless of membership number—are eligible to apply for these grants. The NEA Urban Initiatives unit (part of Membership and Organizing) administers the program and looks for proposals that either:

- **reflect some aspect of the current NEA program** (e.g., improving student achievement; quality professional development; changes in school organization; public, parental, and business engagement in student learning; Association capacity building for quality teaching and learning; promoting school safety; and coordinating education and social services) **or**
- **use technology to promote networking among school personnel.**

Proposals can be organized around the themes of:

- **improving student achievement**
- **promoting school safety**
- **coordinating education and social services**
- **quality professional development**
- **public, parental, and business engagement in student learning**
- **quality teaching and learning.**

Proposals must be postmarked by September 30. Completed applications are sent to the appropriate NEA regional offices with additional copies sent to appropriate state executive directors. The regional offices perform the initial screening of proposals and forward them, with any recommendations, to NEA Urban Initiatives/Membership and Organizing.

Grant recipients are notified through the regional offices in November/December. NEA retains the right to publicize, reproduce, or use the reports and/or products resulting from any of the Urban Grants projects. For more information and for an application, go to www.nea.org/teachers/urbangrants.html or contact NEA Urban Initiatives, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036; 202-822-7155; e-mail: urbaned@nea.org.

MORE MONEY FROM THE NEA FOUNDATION

The NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education grants fund innovations that significantly improve student achievement and close the achievement gap for underserved learners. **The NEA Foundation has increased grant amounts to $5,000** for each funded project.

Innovation grants support collaborative efforts by two or more colleagues to develop and implement creative ideas that result in high student achievement. The proposed work should engage students in critical thinking and problem solving that deepen their knowledge of standards-based subject matter. The work should also improve students' habits of inquiry, self-directed learning, and critical reflection. Innovative ideas on closing the achievement gap for underserved students are encouraged.

THE NEA FOUNDATION FOR THE IMPROVEMENT of EDUCATION
www.nfie.org

Grant funds may be used for resource materials, supplies, equipment, transportation, software, or professional development necessary to implement the innovative idea. Preference will be given to applicants who serve economically disadvantaged students.

The $5,000 grants are awarded year-round. Grant funds may not be used to pursue degrees, to pay indirect costs or grant administration fees, or to pay salaries. With the exception of study groups, funds may not be used by applicants to pay themselves stipends. Grant funds may not be used to serve K–12 students in after-school or weekend settings or for lobbying or religious purposes.

Applications may be submitted at any time and notification will be made within seven months of receipt of the application. Grants fund activities for 12 months from the date of the award.

Applicants must be practicing U.S. public school teachers in grades K–12, public school education support professionals, or higher education faculty and staff at public colleges and universities. Preference will be given to NEA members.

For more information and application guidelines, go to www.nfie.org or contact The NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036-3207; 202-822-7840.

SOAR with Student Program Grants

Building a strong presence on a college campus is one of the biggest challenges that NEA Student Program chapters face. NEA provides financial assistance in the form of SOAR (Student Organizing and Assistance Resources) grants to encourage efforts to recruit new members or organize a student chapter.

Chapters may apply for funding to recruit in the following areas:

- **urban institutions**
- **minority populations and historically minority campuses**
- **community colleges**
- **high school future educator programs**

Priority is given to student locals working with UniServ units.

For more information and for an online application, go to www.nea.org/student-program/programs/soar.html.

Other Grants and Awards

GENDER EQUITY GRANTS

The American Association of University Women offers grants and fellowships to women who are currently teachers, looking to get into teaching, or doing master's or doctoral work in K–12 and higher education.

> **Eleanor Roosevelt Teacher Fellowships** offer opportunities for women public school K–12 teachers looking to improve women's education in all fields, especially math, science, and technology. Selected teachers may receive up to $5,000 to plan gender-equity based programs, and to cover attendance at conferences, workshops, and the five-day Eleanor Roosevelt Teacher Institute in July 2004. The conference brings teachers together to help understand and teach education equity through classroom activities and provides resources for teachers. Women public school teachers also may apply for a **Project Implementation Grant,** which provides support for a classroom or school program to advance gender equity and covers attendance at the three-day Grantee Meeting at the Eleanor Roosevelt Teacher Institute. Grants up to $10,000 are available. Preference is given to former Professional Development Fellowship recipients. Applications for the 2004–05 academic year are due January 10, 2004. For more, see www.aauw.org/fga/fellowships_grants/eleanor_roosevelt.cfm.

> **Community Action Grants** are available to women developing new programs or non-degree research projects promoting education and equality for women and girls. Recipients of the award can receive up to a $10,000 grant to work on proposed projects. Applications for the 2004–05 academic year are due January 15, 2004. For eligibility requirements visit www.aauw.org/fga/fellowships_grants/index.cfm.

NEW AWARD CROSSES BORDERS

According to an Asia Society report, Americans seriously lack knowledge and understanding of international cultures, regions, and languages. That's why this nonprofit organization is teaming up with The Goldman Sachs Foundation to establish The Goldman Sachs Foundation Prizes for Excellence in International Education.

Each year starting this November, five $25,000 prizes will be awarded to schools, states, colleges, universities, and media/technology groups that show exemplary advancement in teaching America's students about the world outside our country's borders.

These first-ever prizes recognize the need to close the international knowledge gap and hope to stimulate creativity in school curricula and promote global awareness in students. Experts in education and international studies will evaluate applications and choose three finalists from each category. An independent jury of business, political, education, and media leaders will then choose five winners, who will be presented with their awards during the second States Institute on International Education in the Schools on November 18.

continues on next page

BOOKS BY NEA MEMBERS

RIDDLE MATH: USING STUDENT-WRITTEN RIDDLES TO BUILD MATHEMATICAL POWER

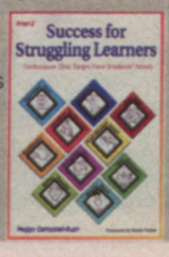
By Carl M. Sherrill

Written by an elementary teacher and field tested at six schools, this book lays out a supplementary mathematics program for elementary-age students. The program requires rigorous thinking from children as they model their solutions with a variety of materials. Once they solve the student-written riddles in the book, students create riddles for their classmates to solve. 136 pp. $21.95 plus s&h from Morning River Publications. To order, visit www.amazon.com or call 800-852-4890.

SUCCESS FOR STRUGGLING LEARNERS: TECHNIQUES THAT TARGET YOUR STUDENTS' NEEDS

By Peggy Campbell-Rush

From visual discrimination, auditory processing, and hand dominance to hyperactivity, shyness, and organizational issues, this book addresses all manner of learning difficulties, offering more than 100 simple, effective strategies to empower students to learn in their own way. The author, a 20-year teaching veteran and current kindergarten teacher, focuses the activities on preK–2 students. 96 pp. $14.95 from Crystal Springs Books. Go to www.crystalsprings.com to order.



WINONA LADUKE: RESTORING LAND AND CULTURE IN NATIVE AMERICA

By Michael Silverstone

Part of the Women Changing the World biography series, this book, written by an elementary school teacher, tells how LaDuke overcame prejudice to earn a degree at Harvard and use her leadership skills to reclaim land and rights for Native Americans. The series focuses on women leaders who promote human rights. 112 pp. $10.95 from The Feminist Press at the City University of New York. To order, go to www.feministpress.org/Book/index.cfm?GCOI=55861100141330.

GREECE

By Patrick Ryan

Did you know that the population of Greece is about 11 million people? You'll find this and other interesting facts in *Greece*, one in 46 titles of the Countries: Faces and Places series. Each volume offers easy introductions to each country, including beautiful photos and maps to explore. The books are geared to children in grades 2–6. Author and creative writing and theater teacher Pat Ryan has penned over 20 titles. 32 pp. $25.64 from The Child's World. To order, go to www.childsworld.com or call 800-599-7323.

Grants *continued*

Awardees will also have their innovations documented in a "best practices" guide to be nationally distributed.

Application and nomination materials can be found at www.InternationalEd.org and are due by September 30. For more information, call Michael Levine of the Asia Society at 212-327-9216 or Christopher J. Williams of the Goldman Sachs Foundation at 212-357-5296.

SHELL SCIENCE TEACHER AWARD

The National Science Teachers Association is now accepting applications for the 2004 Shell Science Teaching Award. The $10,000 grant is for K–12 science teachers who have had positive impacts and contributions on students, school, and community through teaching science. The winner and two finalists will also receive an all expense paid trip to the 2004 NSTA Convention. Applications must be submitted by November 15, 2003. Nomination and form requirements are available at www.nsta.org/192.

WENDY'S HEISMAN AWARDS

The Wendy's High School Heisman awards are presented annually to one female and one male high school senior who have excelled as citizens, scholars, and athletes.

Since 1994, teachers, principals, guidance counselors, and coaches across the United States have nominated over 78,000 eligible candidates who played at least one sanctioned sport and held at least a B average. Nominees are judged by ACT, Inc. on academic achievement, community service involvement, and athletic accomplishment.

The competition is narrowed down to 1,020 state finalists, 102 state winners, and finally 12 national finalists who receive a trip to New York City for the televised ceremony where the two winners each receive a Wendy's High School Heisman trophy and a $2,500 monetary award for their school.

Nominations for 2003 are due September 24. Visit www.wendyshighschoolheisman.com to request a nomination packet. For more information, contact Wendy's International via telephone at 800-244-5161 or fax at 614-760-2090.

PUBLIC HEALTH CURRICULUM COMPETITION

Innovative high school teachers will collectively be awarded up to $180,000 in the second annual Young Epidemiology Scholars (YES) Teacher Competition.

Sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and administered by the College Board, YES seeks teachers or teams of teachers with engaging curricula introducing high school students to epidemiology, the science of public health.

Judges will choose winners based on criteria including creativity, practicality, objectives, applicability, and appropriateness. Each submission must employ one or more fundamental principles of epidemiology, ranging from ethics to hypothesis testing.

Up to 18 projects will win $5,000 each, and of these, up to six national winners will win an additional $15,000. Last year's winning entries included curricula on epidemics such as poverty, illiteracy, drug abuse, diabetes, and HIV.

Entries are due by October 15. For more information, visit www.collegeboard.com/yes/ft/atc.html or contact Jennifer Topiel of the College Board by calling 212-713-8052 or e-mailing Jtopiel@collegeboard.org.

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NEA's Read Across America: A Hatful of Resources and Activities

Hold on to your hats! NEA's Read Across America is bigger and bolder than ever, with new resources and features, just in time to celebrate reading and the Seussentennial, a nationwide celebration of Dr. Seuss's 100th birthday, March 2, 2004. In this year's resource kit you'll find a virtual smorgasbord of delightful, delectable recipes of reading activities, mouth-watering book lists for all ages, resources, and a special Seussentennial section. Also new this year is an NEA members-only CD-ROM featuring additional resources and links to a new Read Across America section on OWL.org. Whether you're gearing up for the Seussentennial or spreading the joy of reading all year long, get involved with NEA's Read Across America. For more information, go to www.nea.org/readacross.

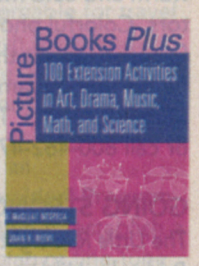
Save the Planet, Support a School

The NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE) and Staples have teamed up for the Staples Recycle for Education Program to help put money back into public education. Teachers can help maintain the environment while raising money for public schools by recycling inkjet or laser toner printer cartridges. Until October 31, 2003, Staples will donate $1 to charities selected by NEA state affiliates or to NFIE for every cartridge turned in at one of the 1,100 nationwide Staples locations.

For more, visit www.staples.com/recycleforeducation. To find a local Staples, visit www.staples-locator.com/. For information on The NEA Foundation, go to www.nfie.org.

In Print

PICTURE BOOKS COME TO LIFE



When the final page is read, the fun does not have to end. *Picture Books Plus: 100 Extension Activities in Art, Drama, Music, Math, and Science* offers activities to go along with a wide variety of book titles. Authors Sue McCleaf Nespeca and Joan B. Reeve provide easy to follow instructions, diagrams, and songs. Students can make no-bake cookies, write with invisible ink, and play charades, all in a creative and fun way. 160 pp. $38 from the American Library Association. To order, call 866-746-7252 or visit www.alastore.ala.org.

CATCH HIM IF YOU CAN

Paisano isn't your average roadrunner. He loves to look at his reflection in a birdbath, and he will sit in front of the fireplace during winter in author Jennifer Owings Dewey's New Mexico home. In *Paisano The Roadrunner*, Dewey chronicles Paisano and his family for three years in this book

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State by state, we're bringing discount auto insurance to America's educators.

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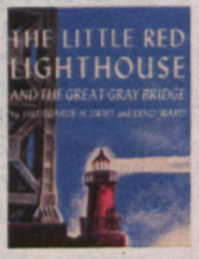
In Print *continued*

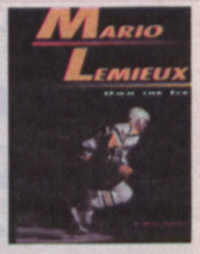
for grades K–3: how the roadrunners hunt for food, survive in warm and cold months, and protect themselves from predators. Colorful photos by Wyman Meinzer accompany a heartfelt story about the author's attachment to the roadrunner family that became a part of her own. 48 pp. $23.90 from Millbrook Press. To order, visit www.millbrookpress.com or call 800-462-4703.

GOING STRONG AT 61



The Little Red Lighthouse and the Great Gray Bridge by Hildegarde H. Swift and Lynd Ward was originally published in 1942 and became a classic for many young readers especially from New York. In fact, when the real lighthouse faced the threat of being torn down in 1951, children wrote letters to save it thanks to the popularity of the book. Although the great gray George Washington Bridge towered over the little red lighthouse of Jeffrey's Hook, the message was clear—no matter how small you are, you have a purpose. Harcourt Books re-released a hardback, restored edition of this classic. 64 pp. $16. To order, go to www.harcourtbooks.com or call 800-543-1918.

OWNING THE ICE



Mario Lemieux is more than a hockey player, he's a role model who has won high honors in his sport and beat his toughest opponent ever, cancer. In *Mario Lemieux: Own the Ice* by Mark Stewart, young hockey fans grades four and up can be inspired by his story and learn the values of tenacity and hard work to overcome outstanding circumstances. 64 pp. $24.90 from Millbrook Press. To order, call 800-462-4703 or go to www.millbrookpress.com.

ELIZABETH'S SONG

A story of determination and passion to inspire young readers, Michael Wenberg's *Elizabeth's Song* is based on the African-American folk legend Elizabeth Cotten, who influenced the likes of John Lennon, The Grateful Dead, and many others. The book shows Cotten as an 11-year-old girl with a song in her heart that eventually becomes the folk classic "Freight Train." Left-handed, Cotten creates her own unique style of playing a right-handed guitar upside down. 32 pp. $15.95 from Beyond Words Publishing. To order, visit www.beyondword.com.

DIVERSITY CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

SEPTEMBER 6—MARIE ZAKRZEWSKA'S BIRTHDAY

A Polish-American physician, Zakrzewska (1829–1902) supported education for African-American nurses. She established several hospitals including the New York Infirmary for Women and Children, the New England Hospital for Women, and Philadelphia Women's Hospital. For more, visit www.geocities.com/jphistoricalsociety/marie.html.

SEPTEMBER 15–OCTOBER 15—HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

This month is dedicated to recognizing the history of Hispanic Americans and how their contributions and achievements have enriched American culture. For more, visit www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson023.shtml.

SEPTEMBER 16—INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

Celebrated on the third Tuesday in September, the opening day of the UN General Assembly, this day highlights the need for peace locally and abroad and the spreading of these ideals. For more, go to www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/peaceflag/whatis.html.

SEPTEMBER 24—SCHOOL DESEGREGATION ORDER ENFORCED

This day marks the anniversary of the desegregation of U.S. schools. Nine African-American students attended the previously all-white Central High School, escorted by federal troops at the order of President Eisenhower to enforce a prior court ruling. For more on this day and civil rights, visit www.civilrights.org/research_center/civilrights101/desegregation.html.

SEPTEMBER 27–28—ROSH HASHANAH

These dates mark the Jewish New Year. Rosh Hashanah is the first in a series of high holy days where renewed responsibility is practiced through religious observance. Go to www.jewfaq.org/holiday2.htm for more information and a listing of other Jewish holidays.

OCTOBER

OCTOBER 1–31, OCTOBER 6—GERMAN AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH AND DAY

Month and day set aside by a presidential proclamation to celebrate and commemorate German-American accomplishments and contributions to American culture. For more, visit www.serve.com/shea/germusa/germusa.htm.

OCTOBER 1–31—ITALIAN AMERICAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE MONTH

Started by a 1989 presidential proclamation, this month examines and celebrates the role Italian-Americans have played in the evolution of American culture. For more, see http://italian.about.com/library/blniahmspecial.htm.

OCTOBER 6—YOM KIPPUR

A Jewish holy day set aside for prayer, fasting, and repentance. For more, see www.jewfaq.org/holiday4.htm.

OCTOBER 27— FIRST DAY OF RAMADAN

This begins the Islamic Holy Month in which Muslims use prayer and fasting to celebrate the revelation of their holy book the Koran. For more information on this day and on the Muslim religion, see www.holidays.net/ramadan/.

MADE OF CLAY

With some practice and patience, you too will be able to create the amazing clay characters featured in *Clay Characters for Kids.* Maureen Carlson gives step-by-step instructions for 30 polymer clay projects that include dragons, cats, and elves. Photos and drawings accompany the easy-to-follow directions for making all the creatures, including tips for details like eyes and ears using easy-to-find items from home. 80 pp. $12.99 North Light Books. To order call, 800-448-0915 or visit www.artistsnetwork.com.

THE MATING GAME

Eligible bachelors and bachelorettes of the animal kingdom attract mates in many ways. Some are passive, such as the bowerbird who displays anything blue in front of their nest home, while some are aggressive, such as the rabbits who engage in a mini boxing match to gain each other's attention. *Boxing Rabbits, Bellowing Alligators: Courtship Poems from the Animal World* by Stephen R. Swinburne combines poetry and fascinating pictures of a number of different animals and explains how they attract their mates. 32 pp. $23.90 from Millbrook Press. To order, visit www.millbrookpress.com or call 800-462-4703.

THE NEED FOR SPEED

Cheetahs, dolphins—they're pretty quick. In *Animals Can Be So Speedy* by Diane Swanson, young readers ages 2-4 can view sharp photos of animals leaping, racing, and soaring on every page. In addition to the action, the "I spy, you spy" sections on each page get readers to slow down and look at the photos carefully to notice the small things about each animal. 24 pp. $10.95 from Greystone Books. To order, visit www.greystonebooks.com or call 800-565-9523

MEET NAICHE

Naiche is a regular kid, with a special family heritage—he's a Native American from the Chesapeake Bay Area who likes gym class, has a dog, and loves to ride his bike. He also helps his family actively participate in events that celebrate Native American culture. Author Gabrielle Tayac helps young children (ages 8 to 12) of different cultures learn about Native Americans through the voice of her young cousin in *Meet Naiche.* Colorful photographs accompany Naiche's discussions of stereotypes and the importance of tolerance in addition to his family history and his sense of pride. 48 pp. $15.95 from Beyond Words Publishing. To order, call 503-531-8700 or go to www.beyondwords.com.

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Heads Up From NEA Member Benefits

Your NEA membership comes with an outstanding package of benefits, including money-saving programs from NEA Member Benefits. The buying power of 2.7 million NEA members enables us to offer you great rates and features on a variety of financial products and services: auto, home, and life insurance plans; retirement savings programs; mortgages and loans; credit products; and member discounts and giveaways. Here are just a few of the exclusive programs offered:

> **NEA DUES-TAB® Insurance**—provided free to eligible members—is a dual life/AD&D plan that covers you on and off the job. Other life, disability, critical illness, and long-term care plans are available to protect you and your loved ones.

> **The new NEA WorldPoints℠ Credit Card** rewards you every time you use it—earn points redeemable for travel benefits, cash back, and merchandise. Plus, there's no annual fee!

> **Chat with an NEA Valuebuilder® Program Representative** to establish a retirement plan or fine-tune the one you already have.

> **With interest rates the best in years**, buying or refinancing a home now may be a smart move. Lock-in a mortgage or "refi," and receive an NEA Getaway℠ vacation bonus in return!

> **Get up to 80 percent off newsstand prices** on magazines, and rent a car through Hertz or Alamo at great member discounts.

> **To register your NEA DUES-TAB** Insurance beneficiary or to learn more about the complete array of NEA Member Benefits programs, call toll-free, 1-800-637-4636, Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.), ET, or visit us online at www.neamb.com.

NO MEMBER DUES DOLLARS ARE EVER USED TO SUPPORT NEA MEMBER BENEFITS PROGRAMS.

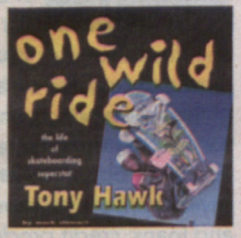
ILLUSTRATION: PHOTODISC

In Print *continued*

TRINO'S TIME

Trino Olivares returns in *Trino's Time* by Diane Gonzales Bertrand. This time around, 13-year-old Trino faces the unexpected challenges life throws from time to time. He's concerned about his unemployed mother who is self-conscious about her limited education and is afraid to apply for a cleaning job at the local university. Inspired by a Tejano hero he must do a history report on, Trino realizes the value of hard work and determination and finally claims the happiness he deserves. For ages 11 and up. 128 pp. $9.95 from Arte Publico Press. To order, go to www.arte.uh.edu or call 800-633-ARTE.

HOT WHEELS



For the young skateboard enthusiasts in your class, *One Wild Ride: The Life of Skateboarding Superstar Tony Hawk* by Mark Stewart, is a good choice. This book explores Hawk's life, the early years as a young boy in a new sport to his rise to fame and how he gained the admiration of skaters internationally. 64 pp. $24.90 from Twenty-First Century Books. To order, visit www.millbrookpress.com or call 800-462-4703.

Take Note

Annual Human and Civil Rights Awards

You're invited to participate in NEA's 38th Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner, July 3, 2004, in Washington, D.C. Please join us in:

- keeping alive the spirit of the American Teachers Association
- honoring individuals and affiliates for their human and civil rights contributions
- celebrating NEA's multicultural roots
- recharging ourselves for the struggle ahead.

But don't just attend the dinner. Get involved by nominating an individual, organization, colleague, or affiliate for an award. Note these dates:

August 2003—Information and award nomination forms become available.

December 15, 2003—Deadline for submission of award nomination forms to HCR.

January/February 2004—Selection of awardees by the NEA Executive Committee, based on recommendations by the Human and Civil Rights Committee.

For more information, contact Human and Civil Rights, National Education Association, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036-3290; www.nea.org/annualmeeting/hcrawards.

Be a UniServ Intern

As part of an ongoing commitment to state and local affiliates, NEA is seeking potential eligible candidates for the 2004 UniServ intern program. Individuals who successfully complete the four-and-a-half-week training program and the three month field experience will be certified by NEA as eligible for UniServ staff work in an NEA state or local affiliate.

All individuals must be committed to moving for the three month field experience. In addition, candidates must:

1. be an ethnic minority member or female as designated by the U.S. census
2. be an Active NEA member for at least one year
3. have basic knowledge and understanding of the Association at the local/state level
4. be committed to pursuing UniServ staff employment upon successful completion of the program
5. have excellent interpersonal skills

OWL.ORG

BACK TO SCHOOL WITH OWL.ORG!

Summer is winding down. September is upon us. It's the start of a new school year, and a new group of students means looking for new strategies and new instructional ideas… **and OWL.org can help.**

Over the summer, the staff at OWL.org has added new features and enhancements to help NEA members in their busy professional lives. If you haven't visited the OWL Web site recently, come check out the new lesson plans, education-related features, and practical classroom tips on Works4Me. OWL also has discounted professional development courses to address your continuing education requirements and online shopping opportunities for your back to school personal and professional needs.

OWL.ORG
OUR WEB LOCATION FOR EDUCATION
A service of the National Education Association and its State and Local Affiliates

Look for these popular features on OWL.org:

- education features and career building information on the *My Profession* channel
- ESP issues discussed on the *My Profession* channel for education support professionals
- timely education news from different sources around the country
- articles on personal finance and health on the My Life channel
- information about the Elementary and Secondary Education Act on the NEA channel and throughout the site.

Want to share a useful idea or have a question that you would like to pose to colleagues? OWL has made it faster and easier than ever. Simply visit the redesigned and enhanced discussion boards and you can connect with educators and NEA members from around the country. OWL is truly about educators helping educators!

And, as always, if you have ideas or suggestions for features you would like to see on OWL, e-mail asktheowl@nea.org.

Best wishes for a happy and prosperous school year!

6. be willing to participate in intensive training

7. be willing to resign all Association offices at the local, state, and national level

8. be willing to work in a learning environment during day and evening hours and learn new skills and attitudes.

NEA does not guarantee employment of UniServ staff; employment is a state/local decision.

Persons interested in applying to the program should send a letter of interest to: Brenda Vincent, UniServ Intern Program, NEA Membership and Organizing, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

All letters of interest must be received at NEA by December 5, 2003, by U.S. mail or Federal Express. Faxed copies will not be accepted. Letters received after the deadline will not be accepted. An application packet along with basic instructions will be sent after a letter of interest is received starting December 2, 2003. **The deadline for applications is January 30, 2004.**

ESP Resources

The NEA Web site is home to three new resources for education support professionals.

> **NEA K–12 Education Support Professionals: Making a Difference for Public Education** comprises a set of 11 brochures that describe ESP jobs and the people who perform them. A PDF version and online versions of the guides are available at www.nea.org/esphome/jobs/index.html. NEA's system of nine job groups and 60 job subgroups are designed to help people understand and compare the individual ESP roles.

> **The education support professionals guide to student health and safety, Providing Safe Health Care,** can be viewed at www.nea.org/esphome/nearesources/safecare.html and serves as an in-depth resource that covers all areas of health and safety for students with special needs from training of staff to assisting students and laws governing their care.

> The U.S. Department of Education's 14-page document, **Title I Paraprofessional Non-Regulatory Guidance,** written in question and answer format, is also located on the ESP site. It deals with many questions paraprofessionals may have about the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, including general information, requirements for paraprofessionals, paraprofessional assessment, related issues, and funding issues. The document, available as a PDF file or text document, can be viewed at www.nea.org/esphome/issues/paraguidance-sec1.html. Joining the report is information on paraprofessionals, who they are, what they do, and more frequently asked questions.

Help for Parents

Looking for ways to involve parents in education? NEA's new online resource guides for parents answer questions about topics that may be on their minds or yours. The nine guides include information on how parents can take charge and better support and understand their children's education. Topics discussed in the guide include:

> understanding testing
> parental involvement
> helping children succeed in reading, math, and science
> family support
> finding the right supplemental service providers
> supporting school success
> improving school achievement.

For complete text of the guides go to www.nea.org/parents/.

ILLUSTRATION CENTER: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

On TV

BIOGRAPHY SPECIAL

The Post-Impressionists: Van Gogh and Gauguin
A&E, September 1–2, 7 a.m., ET, check local listings.
The friendship between Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin is explored in this two-part program. The one-hour episodes also portray the artists' Studio of the South and their different approaches to painting that set the stage for modern art. Can be taped and used in the classroom for two years with teaching materials available at www.aetv.com/class.

Founding Brothers
History Channel, September 1–4, 6 a.m., ET.
This four-part sequel to the Founding Fathers series explores the forces that drove men such as George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison to create a new government unlike any the world had ever known. Can be taped and used in the classroom for two years. Teaching materials are available at www.historychannel.com/classroom.

Destiny Determined: Power and Ritual in Asia
Discovery Channel, September 9, 9 a.m., ET, check local listings.
Learn the history of the Great Wall of China, the dynasty of Qin Shi Huangdi, the Silk Road, the Japanese history of ritual, and more in this one-hour show. Can be taped and used in the classroom for one year. Teaching materials are available at www.discoveryschool.com.

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On TV *continued*

The Weather Classroom
The Weather Channel, September 15 and 18, 4 a.m., ET. This series explores weather phenomena, revealing the power of nature and demonstrating principles related to how weather works. The 30-minute episodes cover weather basics for elementary-school-age students and can be taped and used in the classroom. Find teaching materials at www.weather.com/education.

Hispanics and the Medal of Honor
History Channel, September 16, 6 a.m., ET.
The role of Hispanic soldiers in America's military history is explored here as veterans tell of their struggles against prejudice within the ranks and relive the events that led to their being decorated with the Medal of Honor. The one-hour program can be used in the classroom for two years.

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Enhance communication among parents, students, and teachers!
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Updating a TeacherWeb is as easy as typing an email!
A teacher can create an "online homework hotline" in minutes, and maintain it very simply.
CLASSROOM WEBSITES FOR EDUCATORS
www.TeacherWeb.com

LEARNING FIRST OFFERS GUIDANCE ON ESEA

The Learning First Alliance, a partnership of 12 leading education groups, including NEA, has developed a set of Web-based materials to help schools and their communities understand and respond to the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The materials give special attention to those schools that will be labeled "in need of improvement."

The materials offer guidance for how to communicate positive information about your public school. They are designed to help teacher and ESP leaders, school leaders, and parent leaders explain and discuss the law, its requirements, and its implications for local schools and districts to various groups in their communities. The materials are not intended to be used to advocate for or against specific provisions in ESEA.

The materials can be downloaded from the Learning First Alliance Web site at www.learningfirst.org and include links to NEA and other relevant resources and organizations.

Founded in 1997, the Learning First Alliance is dedicated to improving student learning in America's public schools.

Moving Immigrants to The Front of the Bus

Don't try to tell Los Angeles math coach Andy Griggs that immigration reform isn't an education issue. In his work at Shenandoah Elementary with non-citizens and their kids, this veteran educator sees the strain of "parents holding down two or three jobs that nobody else wants at minimum wage," and the "emotional hardships" of families divided and "broken" by the nation's immigration bureaucracy.

Hardest of all for Griggs: the sight of a child in tears after a holiday visit to family members stranded in Mexico or Guatemala, or a new immigrant student who "will not go into a classroom" out of fear of being separated from relatives.

That's why Griggs—co-chair of the Human Rights Committee of United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) and Pacific region coordinator of the NEA Peace and Justice Caucus—recently worked with Mary Ann Pacheco and David Hernandez of the NEA Hispanic Caucus to win NEA Representative Assembly support of the **Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride (IWFR) from September 27 to October 4.**

Modeled after the Freedom Rides of the 1960s, which targeted racial bias in the interstate bus and train networks, the IWFR will focus the nation's attention on the subservient, second-class status of non-citizens and prod Congress to reform the nation's antiquated immigration laws.

IWFR buses packed predominantly with immigrants will depart from 10 major cities, stop for events in 80 towns, roll on to Washington, D.C., for a Lobby Day, and wind up at an October 4 mass rally in Queens, New York.

Among other objectives, IWFR organizers—including labor, civil rights, community, immigrant, and business groups—seek a "clear road to citizenship" for immigrant workers, the right of non-citizens to reunite their families, and the protection of immigrants' labor rights and civil liberties. Immigrant workers "need equal rights on the job and the right to organize unions—regardless of their immigration status," stresses IWFR spokesperson David Koff.

The Ride has gained some impressive supporters, including California's lieutenant governor and state Senate and the governor of New Jersey. Now IWFR organizers seek the backing of NEA members and affiliates—to endorse the IWFR, sponsor riders, organize local events, or make contributions.

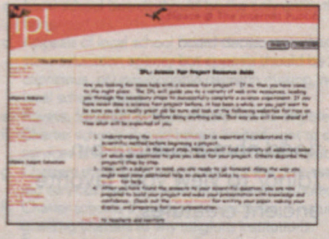
FOR MORE, go to www.iwfr.org.

PHOTO: SAM HOLLENSHEAD

On the Web

SCIENCE FAIR HELP

Let the Science Fair Resource Guide get your students in high gear before competition begins. With its many links, detailed explanations, the ask-a-question feature, and idea bank, the online guide can be the extra kick your students need to succeed with their projects and improve science knowledge. While the online game section keeps the site fun and exciting, students can also pick up tips on how to push the limits of their project ideas while keeping their projects safe. Go to http://ipl.si.umich.edu/div/kidspace/projectguide/.



PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST

Teach students about Picasso's cubism without traveling to Spain. Students can access a complete timeline of the painter's life, including links to pictures of his art works by going to www.tamu.edu/mocl/picasso/.

SCHOOL SCRABBLE

Let students build vocabulary through play or start preparing for the School Scrabble Association Tournament in spring of 2004 by visiting the School Scrabble Program Web site. The site contains information on the contest, how to organize a local Scrabble chapter at your school, and how to use the game to increase vocabulary. Visit http://school.scrabble-assoc.com/index.asp.

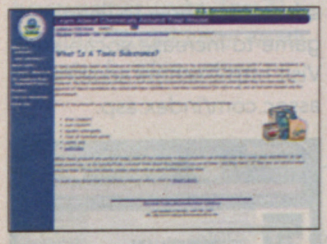
CALLING FUTURE EDUCATORS

Teachers looking to encourage middle school and high school students interested in a teaching career can use resources provided by the Future Educators of America (FEA). FEA provides mentoring, scholarship grants, and summer programs for interested students. For more information or to learn how to start a local FEA at your school, visit www.pdkintl.org/studser/sfeamore.htm#4.

CHEMICAL SAFETY AT HOME

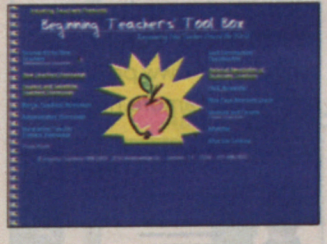
Learn About Chemicals Around Your House, maintained by the Environmental Protection Agency, helps students answer questions about pesticides and toxic chemicals commonly used in the home. The site contains sections that explain how to read labels and list what to do in case of an accident. An

online tour of the home invites students to identify pesticides and toxic substances in a typical kitchen, garage, laundry room, bathroom, and bedroom. Go to www.epa.gov/kidshometour/toxic.htm.



TOOLS FOR NEW TEACHERS

Start the year off right with a trip to the Beginning Teacher's Toolbox, an online guide created by a group of veteran teachers. Browse through teaching and time saving tips, links to professional resources, articles on education issues, and information on becoming a teacher, including scholarship information and links to popular education job sites. Go to www.inspiringteachers.com.



DINOSAUR GUIDE

Bring your students back millions of years in time with the National History Museum's interactive dinosaur guide, which puts history, timelines, pictures, and dino games at your fingertips. Visit http://flood.nhm.ac.uk/cgi-bin/dino/ to view your favorite ancient creatures.

Teaching Respect

"Don't Laugh at Me" is the focus of Operation Respect. Started in September of 2000 by folksinger Peter Yarrow to help promote diversity in the classroom, the program uses music to unite students and teaches healthy ways to resolve conflict by using classroom activities. Don't Laugh at Me (DLAM) programs exist for grades 2–5, grades 6–8, and for summer camps and after-school programs. Visit http://www.operationrespect.org to find more information on this ongoing initiative, to see classroom resources, and to order a free DLAM kit.

PARENT ADVOCACY

The National Parenting Center (NPC) is a parent advocacy group that offers advice on issues from pregnancy to raising teens. Check out www.tnpc.com for tips on calculating college costs and to chat with other parents. The site also includes seal of approval reports of children and parent products tested by NPC.

BULLETIN BOARD IDEAS

Looking for some new ideas to dress up your bulletin boards this fall? Then visit www.kimskorner4teachertalk.com/classmanagement/bulletinboards.html and choose from short, teacher-submitted descriptions of bulletin boards that will work for almost any classroom, subject, and grade level.

WEB SITES 101

Are you looking for ways to integrate technology into your instruction? Or have you ever wanted to make your own educational Web site? Linda's Teacher Training is a good place to start. This comprehensive site offers step by step guides to to developing your own Web page and includes sample pages, links to other useful sites, and tips on how to develop a storyboard for your site. A separate list of resources links to sites offering more information on how to use Web pages for instruction. Go to http://mywebpages.comcast.net/ljbm/index.htm.

Democracy in Action

Resolutions Amended or Newly Adopted by the 2003 Representative Assembly

A-10. School Boards

The National Education Association believes that it is the responsibility of school boards to provide a quality education to each student within a school district. The Association also believes that school boards must provide resources and support so that each school in a district meets standards for educational excellence. The Association further believes that school boards must promote public understanding of the importance of public education and the schools and programs within their school districts.

The Association believes that the composition of school boards must be representative of the population within the school district, including minority groups; that board members must be elected by the voters in the school district; and that board members must be elected from representative districts. The Association opposes state and mayoral takeovers of school districts. The Association also believes that the closing of schools by school boards to avoid legislative corrective action is not in the best interest of students, parents, or school employees. The Association further believes that provisions should be made for parents/guardians of students who are attending school in a district other than their home district as part of a court-ordered interdistrict busing plan to have substantive influence on board actions and policies.

The Association believes that student participation in a school board's deliberative process should be encouraged; however, student input in the voting process should be advisory only. Wherever a school board includes student members, the Association also believes that the student members should be excluded from participating in discussions, receiving information, and voting on issues dealing with education employees and items contained in negotiated agreements.

The Association further believes that school board meetings must be held at times and places that allow education employees, local affiliates, and the community to participate in educational decision making. (1980, 2003)

A-15. Federal Financial Support for Education

The National Education Association believes that the federal government has a legitimate and proper concern and responsibility for the quality of public education provided to its citizens.

The federal government should—

a. Ensure equity and adequacy of educational opportunity for all
b. Collect basic data to be used in public schools and to engage in research, development, and consultation activities that support quality state and local education programs
c. Grant supplemental aid to states that are not able to raise adequate funds to provide all students with a high-quality education and to provide funding to support state and local government efforts in pursuit of national interests in public education.

Therefore, federal funding formulas should reflect the most current, accurate accounting of the public school population; measurements of poverty; and the state's ability to raise adequate funds. The Association also believes that funding for federal programs should be substantially increased, not merely redistributed among states.

The Association further believes that there should be federal support for education whereby:

a. The federal government assumes a full partnership role with local school districts by providing significant levels of federal funding for elementary and secondary education through a program of general aid and categorical assistance.
b. Federal education funding is clear and identifiable within the federal budget.
c. Federally funded instructional programs have maximum teacher involvement in their development at the federal level and must be implemented at the local level only after the involvement and approval of the recognized bargaining agent or local affiliate.
d. Advisory committees for federally funded programs reflect the ethnic makeup of local communities and maintain a gender balance to ensure accountability and equity. Parents/guardians, students, and educators should be included as members of these committees.
e. The amount of aid is generally predictable for long-range planning and specifically predictable for year-to-year planning.
f. Federal legislation complies with civil rights statutes and is consistent with the constitutional provision respecting the establishment of religion and provides for judicial review as to its constitutionality.
g. Categorical funding is assured in areas such as special education, bilingual/English as a second language, and the economically/educationally disadvantaged.

The Association believes that federal monies budgeted for pre-K through 12 education must be equitably and adequately expended for public education at the pre-K through 12 level. The Association opposes any federal legislation, laws, or regulations that provide funds, goods, or services to sectarian schools. The Association also opposes providing such funds, goods, or services to nonsectarian private schools or nonpublic school students in pre-K through 12 education, unless those funds, goods, or services are used for educational services that are not available in public schools to which students have reasonable access. The Association condemns and deplores federal policies and programs that serve to undermine America's historical commitment to free public education. (1983, 2003)

A-24. Voucher Plans and Tuition Tax Credits

The National Education Association believes that voucher plans, tuition tax credits, or other funding/financial arrangements that use tax monies to subsidize pre-K through 12 private school education can undermine public education; reduce the support needed to fund public education adequately; cause racial, economic, and social segregation of students; and threaten the constitutional separation of church and state that has been a cornerstone of American democracy.

The Association opposes voucher plans, tuition tax credits, or other such funding arrangements that pay for students to attend sectarian schools. The Association also opposes any such arrangements that pay for students to attend nonsectarian pre-K through 12 private schools in order to obtain educational services that are available to them in public schools to which they have reasonable access.

The Association also believes that any private school or agency that receives public funding through voucher plans, tax credits, or other funding/financial arrangements must be subject to all accountability measures and regulations required of public schools. (1970, 2003)

A-29. Improving and Maintaining Educational Facilities

The National Education Association believes that many educational facilities are in a state of decay, neglect, and/or deterioration. The Association supports funding to modernize, expand, replace, and/or maintain these facilities in order to provide a safe, healthy, and effective teaching and learning environment for students and education employees.

The Association also believes that the community, parents/guardians, students, and education employees must be effectively involved in the development of plans to modernize, expand, and/or replace facilities.

The Association further believes that preventive maintenance in all facilities is equally important in achieving this goal. (1969, 2003)

A-30. Charter Schools and Other Nontraditional Public School Options*

The National Education Association supports innovation in public education. The Association believes that charter schools and other nontraditional public school options have the potential to facilitate reforms, such as decentralized and shared decision making, diversity in educational offerings, and the removal of onerous administrative requirements. By developing new and creative methods of teaching and learning that can be replicated in mainstream public schools, these schools may be agents for positive change. The Association also believes that, when concepts such as charter schools and other nontraditional school options are proposed, affected public education employees should be directly involved in the design, implementation, and governance of these programs.

The Association further believes that plans should not negatively impact the regular public school program and must include adequate safeguards covering contract and employment provisions for all employees, voluntary participation, health and safety standards for all students and employees, nondiscrimination and equal educational opportunity, staffing by licensed education professionals, and financial responsibility.

The Association believes that programs must be adequately funded, must comply with all state laws and standards applicable to regular public schools, must include start-up resources, must not divert current funds from the regular public school programs, and must contain appropriate procedures for regular periodic assessment and evaluation, as well as adequate attendance and record keeping procedures.

The granting of charters should be consistent with the following principles:

a. Charter schools should serve as a laboratory for field-testing curricular and instructional innovations and/or to provide educational opportunities for students who cannot adequately be served in mainstream public schools.
b. Charter school programs must be qualitatively different from what is available in mainstream public schools and not just an avenue for parental choice.
c. Local school boards should be the only entity that can grant or renew charter applications.
d. Appeals of local school board decisions in charter applications should be made to a state education agency but appeals should be heard only on the grounds of arbitrary, capricious, or unreasonable decision making, not on the educational judgment of the local school board.
e. Private, for-profit entities should not be eligible to receive a charter.
f. Charter schools should have a limited right to contract with for-profit entities for services only to the extent that mainstream public schools can do so.
g. Charters should not be granted for the purpose of home schooling, including providing services over the Internet to home-schooled students.
h. Charter schools should be nonsectarian in nature. Particular care should be exercised in granting charters to any religious institutions.
i. Private schools should not be able to convert to charter school status. If state law allows such conversions, the chartering agency should ensure that the converted school is significantly different in student body, governance, and education program than its predecessor. This assurance should be especially vigorous in the case of schools with prior religious affiliation.
j. Charters should be granted for a limited period with five years being the norm.
k. Charter schools should be monitored on a continuing basis and the charter should be subject to modification or revocation at any time if the children's or the public's interest is at stake.
l. Charters should not be granted unless the chartering agency is satisfied that adequate startup resources will be available.

Charter schools should be designed and operated in accordance with the following principles:

a. Charter schools may have flexibility within the requirements of law dealing with curriculum, instruction, staffing, budget, internal organization, calendar, and schedule.
b. Charter schools should be required to meet the same requirements as mainstream public schools with regard to health and safety, public records and meetings, licensure/certification of teachers and other employees, finance and auditing, student assessment, civil rights, and labor relations.
c. Teachers and education support professionals should be considered public employees.
d. Teachers and education support professionals should have the same constitutional and statutory rights as other public employees.
e. Charter schools should be subject to the same public sector labor relations laws as mainstream public schools and charter school employees should have the same collective bargaining rights under law and local practice as their counterparts in mainstream public schools.
f. Students should not be charged tuition or required to pay a fee to attend a charter school.
g. Students should not be involuntarily assigned to attend a charter school.
h. Charter schools should have some discretion in selecting or rejecting students if they are designed to serve a targeted student population. Students shall not be screened on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation and/or gender identification, English-language proficiency, family income, athletic ability, special needs, parental involvement in school affairs, intellectual potential, academic achievement, or cost of educating the student. Indirect screening such as denying admission because of the cost of transportation of a student shall not be permitted.

*The NEA Policy Statement on Privatization and Subcontracting, as adopted by the 2000 NEA Representative Assembly, is available upon request from the Office of Governance and Policy.

i. Employment in a charter school should be voluntary. Employees in conversion charter schools should be afforded an opportunity to transfer to a comparable position at another mainstream public school.
j. Charter schools should not disproportionately divert resources from mainstream public schools. Charter schools should receive the same amount of money as a comparable mix of students in a mainstream public school. Adequate funds must be available for capital expenditures such as buildings and equipment that do not come from the operating budget of the charter school or the host district. (1993, 2003)

B-2. Independent Reading Skills

The National Education Association believes that it is critical that students become independent readers to succeed in school and life. Reading instruction, with appropriate intervention, especially in the early grades, is essential for learning in all content areas and for achieving high standards. Teachers at all levels should be provided adequate resources, including a fully funded and staffed library/media center, and encouraged to use their expertise to address the diverse needs of students.

The Association also believes that teachers' efforts to value and promote reading should be supported by parents/guardians, librarians, media specialists, other education employees, and communities. (1998, 2003)

B-7. Diversity

The National Education Association believes that a diverse society enriches all individuals. Similarities and differences among races, ethnicity, color, national origin, language, geographic location, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identification, age, physical ability, size, occupation, and marital, parental, or economic status form the fabric of a society.

The Association also believes that education should foster the values of appreciation and acceptance of the various qualities that pertain to people as individuals and as members of diverse populations.

The Association further believes in the importance of observances, programs, and curricula that accurately portray and recognize the roles, contributions, cultures, and history of these diverse groups and individuals.

The Association encourages affiliates and members to become part of programs and observances that may include cultural and heritage celebrations and/or history months. (1995, 2002)

B-20. Alternative Programs for At-Risk and/or Special Needs Students

The National Education Association recognizes that there must be increased development and maintenance of alternative programs to meet the needs of at-risk and/or special needs students, pre-kindergarten through adult. The Association recommends early and appropriate identification and placement of these students. Teachers and administrators should receive necessary training in diagnostic processes and alternative methods of teaching and learning. Appropriate training should also be provided to education support professionals.

Programs should emphasize a broad range of activities for responding to students' differing behavioral patterns, interests, needs, and learning styles. These programs must be evaluated on stated objectives. Teachers in these programs must have a major role in designing the objectives and evaluations and working with appropriate school and community personnel to execute these objectives and evaluations.

The Association believes that at-risk students who are assigned to an alternative placement due to discipline issues should be required to exhibit regular attendance and adequate academic and behavioral progress, in accordance with an individual program, prior to their return to a regular educational setting. The Association also believes that the rights of students who are protected under the provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act must be preserved.

The Association urges its affiliates to seek adequate compensation, planning time, materials, and facilities for teachers and counselors in these programs.

The Association supports the efforts of its affiliates to negotiate and legislate for the training of teachers seeking additional certification and hiring of an increased number of teachers with education in special areas.

In higher education settings, faculty and education support professionals who are working with special needs students should be provided with appropriate resources to accommodate these students' special requirements.

The Association encourages its state affiliates to seek legislation that would require any person offering services to remediate, correct, or ameliorate reading, speech, language, behavioral, emotional, or learning disabilities, or related problems to be licensed under regulations of each state's department of public instruction or other appropriate agency. (1977, 2003)

B-24. Education for All Students with Disabilities

The National Education Association supports a free, appropriate public education for all students with disabilities in a least restrictive environment, which is determined by maximum teacher and parent/guardian involvement. There must be a full continuum of placement options and services/delivery models available to students with disabilities. In order to implement federal special education legislation effectively, the Association recognizes that:

a. A fully accessible educational environment, using appropriate instructional materials, support services, and pupil personnel services, must match the learning needs of both students with and students without disabilities.
b. Student placement must be based on individual needs rather than on available space, funding, or local philosophy of a school district, must be examined on a regular basis to ensure appropriateness, and should not be made disproportionately by ethnicity or gender. Necessary building/staff modifications must be provided to facilitate such placement.
c. Regular and special education classroom teachers must have a major role in determining an individual education program (IEP) and the appropriateness of educational methods, materials, professional development, and supportive services and must receive a copy of the IEP.
d. Regular and special education teachers, pupil personnel staff, administrators, education support professionals, and parents/guardians must share in planning and implementing the IEP. Prior to implementation, all necessary educational materials, professional development, and supportive services must be provided.
e. Students with physical disabilities and/or medical needs requiring nursing procedures must have their medical needs met by certified/professional school nurses.
f. All impacted staff members must have an appeal procedure regarding the implementation of the IEP, especially in terms of student placement. The procedure must include the right to have the dissenting opinion recorded and attached to the IEP.
g. Suspension and expulsion policies and practices used by local education agencies must be applied consistently to both students with and students without disabilities where misconduct is shown to be unrelated to either the disabling condition or to improper placement.
h. A plan recognizing individual differences must be used in a systematic evaluation and reporting of program development.
i. Limitations must be made in class size, using methods such as weighted formulas, modified scheduling, and/or curriculum design to accommodate the demands of each IEP.
j. All teachers who serve students with disabilities must have scheduled access to resource personnel, instructional assistants, paraprofessionals, co-teachers, and special education teachers.
k. The student's IEP should not be used as criteria for the evaluation of education employees.
l. Communications must be maintained among all involved parties.
m. Staff must not be reduced.
n. All staff must be adequately prepared for their roles through appropriate licensing and ongoing professional development programs.
o. Incentives for participation in professional development activities should, as mandated by law, be made available for education employees.
p. Education employees, as mandated by law, must be appointed to local and state advisory bodies on special education.
q. Education employees must be allowed to take part in the U.S. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services on-site visits to states. Education employees should be invited to these meetings.
r. Local affiliates and education employees must be recruited, trained, and involved in monitoring school system compliance with federal special education legislation.
s. Adequate release time or funded additional time must be made available so that teachers can carry out the increased demands placed upon them by federal special education legislation.
t. Collective bargaining and other means should be used to minimize the potentially severe impact on staff that results from the implementation of special education legislation.
u. Benefits for staff working with students with disabilities must be negotiated through collective bargaining agreements and must be honored.
v. Full funding must be provided by local, state, and federal governments. (1978, 2003)

B-49. Education on Peace and International Understanding

The National Education Association believes that the United States and the other nations of the world should promote peace and international understanding. Educational strategies for teaching peace and justice issues should include the role of individuals, social movements, international, and nongovernmental organizations in the peaceful resolution of conflict.

The Association also believes that educational materials should include activities dealing with peaceful resolution of conflict, the effects of nuclear weaponry and other weapons of mass destruction, strategies for disarmament, and methods to achieve peace. Such materials should also cover major contributing factors to conflict, such as economic disparity, demographic variables, unequal political power and resource distribution, and the indebtedness of the developing world. (1982, 2003)

B-57. Standardized Testing of Students

The National Education Association believes that standardized tests and/or assessments should be used only to improve the quality of education and instruction for students. Standardized tests, whether norm-, criterion-, or standards-referenced, can validly assess only a limited range of student learning. Therefore, they should be only an adjunct or supplement to information obtained through school- and classroom-based assessment conducted by teachers for purposes of supporting and strengthening instruction as well as for summarizing and evaluating student learning. Standardized tests are most useful when designed by the educational professionals closest to the classroom and integrated with assessment information specific to local programs. Affiliates should advocate for, and states and test designers should employ, a variety of developmentally appropriate assessment techniques that allow necessary accommodations, modifications, and exemptions and are bias-free, reliable, and valid. When a test and/or assessment is mandated at the local, state, or national level, it should be reviewed by a panel of appropriate subject area specialists and teachers to ascertain the relevance of the test to the subject area and be used only to evaluate a program's effectiveness toward meeting local, state, or national standards and/or goals.

The Association also believes that, in order for standardized achievement tests and/or assessments to support quality education—

a. Standards must be prioritized to support effective curriculum, instruction, professional development, and assessment.
b. Stakeholders must determine high priority standards. These standards must be clearly and thoroughly described so that the knowledge and skills students need to demonstrate are evident.
c. Valid results of assessment of high-priority standards must be reported standard-by-standard for each student, school, and district.
d. The breadth of the curriculum must be monitored to ensure that attention is given to all standards and subject areas, including those that are not assessed.
e. Progress should be continually monitored to ensure that assessments are appropriate for the purposes for which they are intended.

The Association opposes the use of standardized tests and/or assessments when—

a. Used as the criterion for the reduction or withholding of any educational funding
b. Results are used to compare students, teachers, programs, schools, communities, and states
c. Used as a single criterion for high-stakes decision making
d. The results lead to sanctions or other punitive actions
e. Arbitrary standards are required
f. They do not match the motor skills and/or academic developmental levels or language proficiency of the student
g. Student scores are used to evaluate teachers or to determine compensation or employment status
h. Programs are specifically designed to teach to the test
i. Testing programs or tests limit or supplant instructional time
j. Every student is required to be tested every year
k. Students and parents/guardians are not provided with a complete report of the individual student's test results
l. Time required to administer the test exceeds reasonable and appropriate limits for the age of the student
m. Test preparation impedes or discourages learning, constrains the curriculum in ways that threaten the quality of teaching and learning for students, or limits and/or curtails future educational opportunities of learners
n. Scores are used to track students.

The administration of a standardized test and/or assessment includes the responsibility to educate the stakeholders about the purpose of the test, the meaning of the test results, and the

accurate interpretation of its conclusions. The Association further believes that students, parents/guardians, teachers, administrators, schools, and school districts should not be penalized for parents/guardians exercising their legal rights to exempt their children from standardized tests and/or assessments. The Association believes that states should be encouraged to make test items public after they are no longer used. (1978, 2003)

B-61. Media

The National Education Association believes that the media have an effect on the education of the public. The Association also believes that the media have an obligation to provide full, constructive, balanced, and accurate presentations to the public. The Association supports the media's right to protect information and sources of information from mandated disclosures and search and seizure. Visual media, including the Association's, should include closed captioning for the deaf/hard of hearing and read-along captions on children's commercial and educational programs. (1969, 2003)

B-65. Communication Between Hearing and Deaf/Hard of Hearing People

The National Education Association believes that the lack of communications between hearing and the deaf/hard of hearing has detracted from the potential of a broadly distributed group to contribute fully to our total society.

The Association recommends that instruction be given to hearing students that will help them understand the unique needs of all deaf/hard of hearing students and will help hearing students communicate with deaf/hard of hearing students.

The Association also believes that American Sign Language should be offered as a foreign/world language elective credit at both high school and college levels.

The Association further believes that Educational Sign Language Interpreters/Transliterators must be qualified professionals who are licensed, state credentialed, or nationally certified. (1974, 2003)

B-69. Home Schooling

The National Education Association believes that home schooling programs based on parental choice cannot provide the student with a comprehensive education experience. When home schooling occurs, students enrolled must meet all state requirements. Home schooling should be limited to the children of the immediate family, with all expenses being borne by the parents/guardians. Instruction should be by persons who are licensed by the appropriate state education licensure agency, and a curriculum approved by the state department of education should be used.

The Association also believes that home-schooled students should not participate in any extracurricular activities in the public schools.

The Association further believes that local public school systems should have the authority to determine grade placement and/or credits earned toward graduation for students entering or re-entering the public school setting from a home school setting. (1988, 2003)

C-3. Substance Abuse

The National Education Association opposes inhalant abuse and drug abuse, including alcohol and tobacco dependency.

The Association supports—

a. Standardization of drug laws, including the sale and distribution of drugs
b. Prohibition of the production, sale, and distribution of drug paraphernalia
c. Improvement of drug prevention and rehabilitation programs
d. Mandated drug rehabilitation programs for any violation or conviction, whether civil or criminal, resulting from the possession or use of a controlled substance
e. Research on the genetic and neurological damage done to children through parental substance abuse and the impact on student learning and behavior
f. Appropriate educational experiences to educate students about the serious consequences of participating in any aspect of the illegal drug trade
g. Testing and regulation of performance-enhancing dietary herbal supplements.

The Association also opposes the illegal use of drugs and substances and believes that severe penalties for illegal production, distribution, and sale should be strictly enforced.

The Association also supports strict enforcement of the legal drinking age and the laws governing the sale of alcoholic beverages in each state and supports federal legislation to establish a uniform legal drinking age of 21.

The Association further supports strict enforcement of laws governing the sale of tobacco products and believes that federal legislation should be established to create a uniform age of 18 for purchase, possession, or use of tobacco products. (1972, 2003)

C-17. School Facilities: Design, Construction, and Function

The National Education Association believes that school facilities must be conducive to teaching and learning. The physical environment must allow for a variety of needs, including the number of students, physical characteristics of students, changes in teaching methods, presentation of instruction, and an increased use of school facilities. The Association also believes that all school facilities must be well constructed, safe, energy-efficient, aesthetically pleasing, accessible, functional, and adaptable to persons with disabilities. The Association supports facility designs that promote healthy indoor air quality through properly designed, installed, and maintained ventilation systems and the use of nontoxic materials. The Association further believes that the use, installation, and maintenance of building materials in school facilities must be appropriate and comply with established local, state, and federal guidelines.

The Association believes that the community, parents/guardians, and education employees must be involved through site-based, shared decision making in designing these facilities. Construction designs should incorporate original art.

The Association also believes that stable and sufficient funding must be provided for the design, construction, adequate and ongoing maintenance, and operation of the school facility. (1992, 2003)

C-18. Environmentally Safe Schools

The National Education Association believes that all educational facilities must have healthy indoor air quality, be smoke-free, and be safe from environmental and chemical hazards.

School districts should conduct periodic testing for harmful water and airborne particles/agents that are detrimental to the health of students and education employees and shall report the results publicly.

The Association also believes in the establishment and enforcement of standards of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to ensure health and safety. The Association further believes that pesticide use should be minimized and, if used, advance notice given of location and date of application.

The Association supports ongoing training and certification of education employees who work in potentially hazardous situations. This training must include proper handling, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials and instruction on Materials Safety Data Sheets (MSDS).

Additional health hazards should not be created when facilities are altered or repaired.

The Association believes that school districts must post MSDS and OSHA standards. Students and/or their parents/guardians, education employees, and the public should be notified of actual and potential hazards. All stakeholders should be involved in developing a plan for corrective action. The Association also believes in the development of health and safety standards specifically for children. (1989, 2003)

C-23. Comprehensive School Health, Social, and Psychological Programs and Services

The National Education Association believes that every child should have direct and confidential access to comprehensive health, social, and psychological programs and services. Such programs and services must be interactive and coordinated within and between school, home, and community settings. School and community efforts must also be integrated to promote the well-being of children and youth and to build support for school and community health programs.

The Association also believes that schools should provide—

a. A healthful psychological climate and a safe physical environment
b. Food services that provide nutritious meals and that help students to select nutritionally appropriate foods.

The Association further believes that programs in the schools should provide—

a. A planned, sequential, pre-K through 12 health education curriculum that promotes sound nutrition and that includes education concerning the health risks associated with obesity and eating disorders
b. A planned, sequential, pre-K through 12 health education curriculum that integrates various health topics (such as drug abuse, the dangers of performance-enhancing dietary herbal supplements, violence, safety issues, universal precautions, and HIV education); that is taught by teachers specifically prepared to teach the subject; and that enables students to develop the essential knowledge and skills to maintain personal, family, and community health
c. A planned, sequential, pre-K through 12 physical education curriculum
d. Worksite health promotion to improve the health status of school staff to set an example for desired student behaviors.

The Association believes that services in the schools should include—

a. Counseling programs that provide developmental guidance and broad-based interventions and referrals that promote the physical and psychological health of students
b. Services that identify, diagnose, and resolve learning disabilities
c. Health services provided by a licensed professional school nurse that promote the health of students through prevention, case finding, early intervention, and remediation of specific health problems, that provide first aid and triage of illness and injuries, and that provide health counseling
d. A nurse-to-student ratio at each site that is appropriate to provide quality school health care
e. Comprehensive school-based, community-funded student health care clinics that provide basic health care services (which may include diagnosis and treatment) to supplement school nurses
f. If deemed appropriate by local choice, family-planning counseling, and access to birth control methods with instruction in their use
g. Coordination with community agencies for support and follow-up activities.

The Association also believes that all health, social, and psychological services must be provided by appropriately licensed and certificated professional personnel. The Association further believes that education employees, parents/guardians, students, and personnel from community agencies providing services to students must be involved in the development, implementation, and coordination of these services.

The Association urges its affiliates to support legislation to provide comprehensive care to all children and supports community, state, and national efforts to coordinate these services. (1969, 2003)

C-32. Drug and Alcohol Testing of Students

The National Education Association believes that mandatory drug and alcohol testing of students without probable cause is an unwarranted and unconstitutional invasion of privacy and opposes such testing.

The Association also believes that schools must immediately notify parents/guardians of students suspected of abusing drugs, alcohol, and/or performance-enhancing dietary herbal supplements and must provide information about support services. (1987, 2003)

C-35. Media, Games, Products, and Children

The National Education Association believes that children are an especially vulnerable and easily exploited audience who must be protected from exposure to violence, prejudice, sexual content, and stereotyping by mass media, the Internet, and products that are accessible to children.

The Association is committed to working cooperatively with media producers, advertisers, and manufacturers in developing products that protect the interests of children. The Association encourages the producers of mass media to select and use age-appropriate subject matter in their products targeted at children. The Association also encourages all radio and television programming executives, when determining the appropriateness of program subject matter and the development of broadcasting schedules, to consider children's ages. The Association further encourages advertisers and media professionals to use standard grammar and correct spelling and to refrain from the use of stereotypical and/or discriminatory terminology and profanity.

The Association encourages the producers of games and toys to make explicit to consumers, prior to purchase, the nature of a product's content through specific labeling. The Association also believes that regulations restricting the purchase of games and toys based on age appropriateness should be developed and enforced. The Association deplores exposing children as consumer-test groups to violent interactive games and products in order for manufacturers to determine how to increase or refine the violent content for the express purpose of increasing sales.

The Association further believes that, through media literacy education, education employees, parents/guardians, and children must become critical users of mass media, the Internet, and other products accessible to children. The Association also encourages its affiliates to establish media study committees to monitor media activities and promote positive educational programming. The Association further encourages its affiliates to provide means for education employees to assist parents/guardians in the selection of appropriate media, games, and products for their children. (1969, 2003)

D-14. Professional Development for Teachers and Administrators

The National Education Association believes that continuous professional development is required for teachers and administrators to achieve and maintain the highest standards of student learning and professional practice. The Association also believes that professional development should—

a. Be based upon clearly articulated goals

Top 10 Tips For Beginners

BY TINA HICKS WHITTEN

One of my favorite things about being a veteran teacher is watching brand spanking new, right out of college, first-year teachers beginning their careers. These young 'uns are so full of energy, enthusiasm, hope, determination, and "save the world" attitudes that I find them extremely refreshing. I have mentored many of these talented people and found that, although they are well prepared in content areas and child development research, they didn't learn everything they needed to know in college. Therefore, let me take this opportunity to offer some advice about what I have learned from 10 years in my classroom. Here we go...

Top Tip Two

1. Take your vitamin C.
You will find during your first years that you are sick all of the time. You may even begin to believe that you are allergic to your students. In my first year of teaching I had a conversation with the doctor that went something like this.
Doctor: "It seems you have conjunctivitis (pink eye) in both eyes, again."
Me: "That makes the third time in six months."
Doctor: "Where did you say you work?"
Me (proudly): "I'm a teacher!"
Doctor: "Oh, honey, get used to this then. You'll be sick for the first four years of your career." This brought a completely new meaning to the phrase "sick of my job."

2. Stock up on antibacterial waterless hand soap and disinfectant sprays.
When I am helping children with something, I tend to pick up their pencils and write on their paper. Bad habit, right? God knows where a pencil has been. It is slim enough and long enough to reach the depths of one's nostril and pull out the most interesting things. I always realize this after the pencil is already in my hand. That is why antibacterial waterless hand soap is my friend. I also love to disinfect the classroom. I make my students clean their desks daily. You would be surprised at all the little germs that enjoy living on those desktops among the leftovers from juice spills, snacks, and sneezes. For proof of this, see tip number one.

3. Remember, children are brutally honest.
It no longer hurts my feelings when students tell me that my pink lipstick doesn't match my red shirt or that I am having a bad hair day. I just remember—they truly believe they are doing me a favor by announcing this in front of the class.

4. Keep a journal of the funny things your students say.
I was teaching a group of students one afternoon and needed to write with a blue marker on chart paper. As I was writing, the marker ran out of ink. I put the cap on the marker and tossed it to my team teacher. Without a word, she caught it and threw me another. One boy said, "Miss Hicks—Y'all got that ESPN don't cha?"

5. Invest in good, comfortable shoes.
Don't try to be cute or fashionable. The blisters and corns on your feet aren't worth it.

6. Practice not going to the bathroom for hours at a time.
I get to school at 7:15 a.m. and my first opportunity to pee is at 12:30 p.m. After five hours and 15 minutes, I am praying that the staff bathroom down the hall is available. Bladder control should definitely be taught in college.

7. Practice eating your lunch in three minutes or less.
By the time you help two children find their lunch money, convince five of them that pork dippers really taste like chicken, put 18 pointed straws in juice boxes, and stop two food fights, three minutes is all you will get.

8. Have a stash of chocolate in your desk—you'll need it some days.
Enough said.

9. Don't snap your fingers at other people's children in the grocery store.
I know it's hard—especially when they are climbing on the shelves and racing their carts down the aisle. It's not your classroom.

10. Try not to treat your significant other as though he or she is in third grade.
This suggestion comes from my husband. During a heated "discussion" we were having, I didn't believe he was paying attention to what I was saying. So I asked him to put on his listening ears. Needless to say, this didn't help the disagreement a bit.

There they are! The top 10 tips you never learned in college. Keep them in mind all year.

Tina Hicks Whitten teaches third grade at the New Vision School of Math, Science, and Technology in Madison, North Carolina.

PHOTO: JERRY WOLFORD

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